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Stuart Little

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INT. OFFICE - DAY

A woman with a bee-hive hairdo, gazes across her desk with a comforting smile. This is MRS. CAROL KEEPER.

MRS. KEEPER
How are you feeling?

A couple sits across from her. MR. LITTLE is a wiry fellow in his early forties. MRS. LITTLE is a round woman of the same age. They glance at each other and glance back to Mrs. Keeper.

MRS. LITTLE
We've been...

MR. LITTLE
Tingling with anticipation.

MRS. LITTLE
Yes, tingling.

Mrs. Keeper squeezes another comforting smile at them. Beat.

MRS. KEEPER
Any final questions?

MRS. LITTLE
Yes, what if we make a mistake?

MR. LITTLE
Make a wrong choice.

MRS. LITTLE
Right. Wrong choice.

MRS. KEEPER
Mr. and Mrs. Little... Let me assure you, any choice you make, will be the right one.
(beat)
When it comes to this choice, you can't make a mistake.

A SHRILL BELL CUTS THROUGH THE AIR. THE SOUND OF YOUNG VOICES LAUGHING AND PLAYING GROW OUTSIDE THE WINDOW.

MRS. KEEPER
Ah, recess.
(beat)
It's time for you to meet them.

Mrs. Little clutches Mr. Little's hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Little stare out onto the playground. DOZENS UPON DOZENS OF YOUNG VOICES SPIKE THE AIR.

For the first time, we see who those voices belong to.

Playing on the grounds, are not only boys and girls, but animals of all shapes and sizes. Pigs and dogs. Cats and birds. All play games, ride the slides, and play tag together with the human children.

Mr. and Mrs. Little move through this colorful world of youngsters.

A young girl chases a dove. They run in circles around the Littles' legs.

YOUNG GIRL
I tagged your wing!

DOVE
Feathers don't count!

They scurry away.

Mr. and Mrs. Little keep moving around. They smile and nod as they walk and observe. After a stroll about the grounds, they reach a wooden bench and take a seat on either end.

They stare out at the many playful beings running to and fro. Beat.

YOUNG VOICE(o.s.)
Camille can read French.

Mr. and Mrs. Little look at each other and then look down between them to find a mouse seated in tiny shorts and shirt, wearing reading glasses. He's about three inches high. He has a miniature book on his lap. STUART points to a little girl on the swings.

STUART
And next to her is Belle. She sings.

Stuart looks up at Mrs. Little.

STUART
Wait. Did you want a boy?

MRS. LITTLE
We don't know. This is all so...so...

MR. LITTLE
Enchanting and new.

MRS. LITTLE
Exactly, enchanting and new.

Stuart turns and looks to Mr. Little and then back to Mrs. Little and then back to Mr. Little.

STUART
That's wonderful, the way you know what she's going to say before she says it.

MR. LITTLE
It happens when you're around each other for a long time. From being a family.

Stuart smiles such a big smile.

STUART
How wonderful.

Stuart looks back out over the playground.

STUART
If you want a boy,
(points)
Benny can do handstands.

The Littles look out over the playground - they see a set of legs bobbing in the air on the other side of a bush. Their gaze returns to Stuart.

MRS. LITTLE
You know quite a lot about everyone.

STUART
I've been here a long time.

Beat. Stuart returns to his book. Mr. and Mrs. Little watch him quietly. Stuart doesn't look up when he speaks.

STUART
You shouldn't worry about choosing.
(beat)
It happens the same every time. First you won't know what to do. You'll be a bit scared. Then you'll meet one of them, talk to them... and you'll just know.
(beat)
You'll know you just met your son or daughter.

Stuart doesn't say anything else. Mr. Little looks up and makes eye contact with Mrs. Little.

THE SOUNDS OF YOUNGSTERS PLAYING, FILLS THE AIR.

CUT TO:

INT OFFICE - DAY

Mrs Carol Keeper looks across the table blankly.

MRS. KEEPER
This is a mistake!

MRS. LITTLE
You said we couldn't make a mistake.

MRS. KEEPER
It's just that generally, we don't encourage, well we don't suggest that couples pick children outside of their species. It rarely works out.

Beat.

MRS. LITTLE
Oh you shouldn't be concerned about that Mrs. Keeper.

MRS. KEEPER
And why is that?

MRS. LITTLE
Because... Well because...

MR. LITTLE
We just know.

Mrs. Little takes Mr. Little's hand. She smiles.

MRS. LITTLE
Yes, we just know.

Mrs. Keeper looks across her desk and plays with her bee-hive hairdo nervously.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE on a paper being rolled into a typewriter.

The top of the paper reads, "Adoption Form." The paper is scrolled to the line marked, "New name." The letters come on in a staccato burst.

"S-T-U-A-R-T L-I-T-T-L-E"

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE HOUSE - DAY

The Little station wagon eases to a stop in front of a corner brownstone. Stuart's tiny face presses up against the passenger window as he gazes upward at the aged stone building.

STUART
(awe)
The family home.

MR. LITTLE
The very first Littles lived here. It's been a home for seven generations of Littles.
(beat)
They say every Little in the world knows how to find the Little house.

MRS. LITTLE
Something inside them.

Stuart's wide eyes reflect the image of the enchanting home.

STUART
(whispers)
Something inside.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Stuart walks over the kitchen tiles in a tweed suit, carrying his one suitcase. He cranes his neck as he looks around.

Mr. and Mrs. Little stand in the doorway.

MRS LITTLE
This is our kitchen. This is where we make foods such as western omelettes, fried zucchini and all varieties of meat loaf.

Stuart gazes up at the Subzero unit.

STUART
(awe)
The family refrigerator. It's more beautiful than I imagined.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Stuart walks into the dining room.

MR. LITTLE
This is our dining room. This is where we eat foods such as western omelettes, fried zucchini, and all varieties of meat loaf.

Stuart touches the wood of the table leg with great reverence.

STUART
(awe)
The family dining table. Where there's a place for every member of the family.

CUT TO:

INT HALL - DAY

Stuart stands on the mail table and looks at the many photographs that don the walls.

STUART
The family photo collection.

Stuart spots an empty place in the middle of all the frames.

STUART
What goes there?

Mrs. Little smiles.

MRS. LITTLE
You do.

STUART
I do?

MRS. LITTLE
We're going to take a new picture. All of us. We'll get dressed up.

Stuart gazes at the empty space.

STUART
My first family portrait.

The SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS FILL THE HALL. Everyone turns to see fifteen year old GEORGE LITTLE walk down the corridor towards them.

MR. LITTLE
George, meet your new brother Stuart. Stuart this is George.

George stares at Stuart for a beat.

GEORGE
You look somewhat like a mouse.

STUART
I am a mouse.

GEORGE
I see.
(beat)
I have to go.

With that, George moves quickly to a door underneath the stairs. Opens it, and disappears into the basement.-The door closes behind him. Mr. and Mrs. Little and Stuart stare at the door. Beat.

MR. LITTLE
George spends a lot of time alone.

MRS. LITTLE
(worried)
A lot of time.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

MRS. LITTLE
This is your bedroom Stuart.

Stuart looks around the room. It's filled with baby things. A baby carriage, playpen, stroller... all human size. Beat.

MRS. LITTLE
We thought you'd be bigger.

MR. LITTLE
And homo sapien in nature..

Mrs. Little nods her agreement. TO ELABORATE AN EXPRESSION ?

CUT TO:

INT. CLOSET - DAY

The closet door opens spraying daylight over a small townhouse about two feet tall that sits on the floor of the closet.

Mr. Little stares down.

MR. LITTLE
Snowbell, it's ten o'clock.
You're late for work.

A scratchy morning voice calls back from the house.

SNOWBELL(o.s.)
I'm sick. I'm taking a sick day.

MR. LITTLE
Don't take a sick day today. We want you to meet someone.

Beat.

MR. LITTLE
Snowbell.

SNOWBELL(o.s.)
Take it easy. Keep your pants on.

SNOWBELL, a fluffy white cat, emerges from the townhouse. He scratches his face sleepily as he walks out into the hall. On the wall about a foot off the ground, is a clock and punch card holder. Snowbell pulls his card and punches in for the day.

Snowbell licks his paws and cleans and grooms himself before moving to Mr. Little's legs and making figure eights as he purrs.

SNOWBELL
Meow, meow... I'm so cute.
Meow, meow.

Mrs Little and Stuart walk into the hall.

MRS. LITTLE
Snowbell I want you to meet Stuart. He's our son.

Stuart walks up to Snowbell with his suitcase and his old tweed suit. He looks at Snowbell with a big awed smile.

STUART
The family cat.

SNOWBELL
A mouse?

Snowbell looks to Mr. and Mrs. Little and then back to Stuart.

SNOWBELL
Now I've seen everything.

CUT TO:

INT. TOY STORE - DAY

Stuart rides in a shopping cart as Mrs. Little pushes him. They follow a salesman down an aisle.

SALESMAN
What's the occasion?

MRS. LITTLE
A family portrait.

SALESMAN
Formal?

MRS. LITTLE
Oh yes.

SALESMAN
What colors?

MRS. LITTLE
Taupe or cranberry red.

STUART
And green!

MRS. LITTLE
Oh yes, green would be fine.

SALESMAN
What type of fabric?

MRS. LITTLE
Something that will breathe.
He has a tendency to burrow,
climb and generally scurry
about.

They make the final turn into a row - wall to wall with dolls and action figures.

SALESMAN
And here we are...

The salesman points to a line of figures just about Stuart's size.

SALESMAN
The Ben series... Here we
have Business Ben.

The salesman pulls a doll off the rack draped in a dark green wool suit. He hands it to Mrs. Little.

MRS. LITTLE
Oooh that's very stylish.

She holds the doll in front of Stuart. Stuart peeks around Ben's plastic head to look at the suit.

SALESMAN
It's you.

STUART
It's me?

SALESMAN
It's you.

Mrs. Little nods approvingly.

MRS. LITTLE
We'll take it.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Stuart is standing before a car rearview mirror that has been propped up on a bureau. It serves as a full length mirror for him. He models his new suit.

Stuart gazes at himself proudly.

STUART
It's me.

Stuart strikes a few model poses... "Frozen in a run"... "Sees something in the distance"... "Turns as if someone just called his name."

Stuart stops and looks himself over again. He carefully combs the two tiny hairs on the top of his head with a broken mascara brush.

MRS. LITTLE(o.s.)
Stuart.

STUART
I'm ready for my first family portrait!

Stuart takes one final look. He stands straight and proud. WE HEAR A RIPPING SOUND. Stuart turns just in time to see his TAIL, WHICH WAS TUCKED IN HIS PANTS. BURST OUT THROUGH THE SEAMS. Stuart stares at it.

STUART
I'm not ready for my first family portrait!

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The photographer looks through the lens.

George, Mr. and Mrs. Little and Stuart are squashed on the living room sofa in their best outfits.

George sits with his chin in his hands. Bored. Stuart looks at his big brother and copies him. The two sit holding their chins side by side.

The photographer shakes his head unsatisfied.

PHOTOGRAPHER
It's no good yet. The child must move.

George slides closer to Mr. Little.

GEORGE
Why do we have to sit so close? It's not like... It's not like we're...

MR. LITTLE
Eskimos trying to keep warm from the bitter cold.

GEORGE
Right. We're not Eskimos.

MRS. LITTLE
George it's just for a few more minutes.

George folds his arms angrily. Stuart folds his arms too.

PHOTOGRAPHER
The child must move.

GEORGE
I did move.

PHOTOGRAPHER
No, no. Not that child, the one that looks somewhat like a mouse.

Stuart unfolds his arms and looks up. He smiles at the photographer and walks over his family's laps. He moves to the opposite side.

The photographer looks in the lens. Shakes his head again.

PHOTOGRAPHER
It's no good yet.

He points to Stuart.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Move to the center.

Stuart moves again and takes a seat on Mr. Little's knee.

The photographer looks in the lens again. Shakes his head in disgust.

PHOTOGRAPHER
I can't do it. It's no good. The frame is no good. It doesn't look right.

He steps away from the camera. He looks to Stuart.

PHOTOGRAPHER
He doesn't fit.

The room goes silent. Mrs. Little looks down to Stuart whose face has fallen. He looks like he's about to cry.

Mrs. Little looks up and glares at the photographer.

MRS. LITTLE
Please take the photo.

Beat. The photographer walks back to the camera stand.

PHOTOGRAPHER
It's no good. But if you want no good, fine.

He puts his hand on the button.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Smile.

CLICK.

We see the final family photograph. It doesn't look framed correctly. Everyone's faces are uncomfortable. Stuart's face looks sad. Eyes glazed with water.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stuart lays in a bed made from a matchbox.

Stuart HEARS SOME NOISES and turns to look at the bedroom window as Snowbell crawls in. WE HEAR CATS OUTSIDE LAUGHING BOISTEROUSLY AND YELLING AS THEY MOVE DOWN THE STREET.

Snowbell waves out the window before he closes it.

Stuart sits up and watches as Snowbell's outline in the darkness bumps into books and knocks over crystal figurines on shelves. Snowbell makes it down to the bureau level and realizes he's being watched.

SNOWBELL
Why are you sitting up in the dark? Are you checking on me? Is that what you're doing?

STUART
No Snowbell.

SNOWBELL
I don't need checking on.

STUART
Yes, Snowbell.

Stuart watches as Snowbell wobbles a bit as he stands. He's clearly drunk.

SNOWBELL
You trying to get me fired?

STUART
Not at all Snowbell.

SNOWBELL
I don't care. Go ahead. Get me fired. I don't like working with families anyhow.

STUART
You don't like families? Families are wonderful.

SNOWBELL
What do you know about families?

Snowbell takes an unsteady step towards the matchbox bed.

SNOWBELL
Where's your real family at anyway?

STUART
What do you mean?

SNOWBELL
Your real dad and mom, where are they?

STUART
I was never given a dad and mom.

SNOWBELL
Everyone has a real dad and mom somewhere.

STAURT
They do?

Snowbell shakes his head.

SNOWBELL
You don't know nothing about families do you?

Stuart becomes silent. Beat.

STUART
I guess I don't.
(beat)
This is my real family now right?

Snowbell snickers.

SNOWBELL
Yeah sure kid. Whatever you say.

Snowbell turns and drunkenly hops off the bureau. Stuart stares quietly into the darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Little stands in the hall and looks through a doorway. She's just standing there when Mr. Little walks up to her.

Mrs. Little whispers.

MRS. LITTLE
I'm worried about Stuart.
Something's bothering him.

They both peer into the living room.

Stuart sits in the room on the window ledge of the bay window that looks out over the street and Central Park. His face leans up against the glass. His breath makes two tiny circles of steam.

MRS. LITTLE
We have to be more
sensitive.

Mr. Little nods.

MRS. LITTLE
I've been thinking about the
songbooks we have.

MR. LITTLE
What about them?

MRS. LITTLE
They have too many
references to mice. It might...
It might...

MR. LITTLE
Cause him personal and
emotional distress.

MRS. LITTLE
Yes exactly, emotional
distress.
(beat)

"Three blind mice - see how they run...:"It'll give the child nightmares to think about farmer's wives and carving knives.

Beat.

MR. LITTLE
And what about poems? 'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a... mouse.

MRS. LITTLE
Yes, yes - it should all go.

Mr. Little furrows his brow in thought.

MR. LITTLE
We have to say something else - something that rhymes with 'house'...

MRS. LITTLE
How about spouse?

MR. LITTLE
Or souse?

George walks down the stairs.

GEORGE
I suggest louse.

Mr and Mrs. Little turn and look at George as he opens his basement door.

GEORGE
Mrs. O'Rourke from next door calls her husband that.

George disappears down the stairs. The door closes behind him.

Mr and Mrs. Little let the suggestion sink in.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The Little family sits crammed on one sofa. All are reading with Stuart from a children's book.

FAMILY
Twas the night before
Christmas and all through the
house, not a creature was
stirring, not even a louse.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

The kitchen door opens. THE SOUNDS OF MR. AND MRS. LITTLE SINGING NURSERY RHYMES IN THE LIVING ROOM.

George walks in. Just as the door is about to close, Stuart pops in. He looks up at his big brother to see what he's doing.

George moves to the cabinets. Scratches his head. Stuart moves to the cabinets and scratches his head.

George opens the cabinet door and stares in at the foods on the shelves. Stuart does the same.

George proceeds to open each and every food cabinet in the kitchen and gazes at his culinary options. Stuart hops around with him, following his big brother in every action.

George moves to the refrigerator - opens the door. George doesn't see as Stuart hops in and checks out the choice of food. He smells something wrapped in foil. He opens it. Crinkles his nose and starts to wrap it back up.

THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT! THE LIGHTS GO OUT. A SOFT MOTOR IS HEARD STARTING UP AS COLD AIR IS PUMPED THROUGH THE SPACE.

HALL

George walks into the hall and disappears down into the basement.

FRIDGE

Stuart tries standing on the edge of a shelf and pushing the refrigerator door with both hands... Pushes with all his strength - nothing happens. Stuart looks around at the food containers sitting in shadows. He turns back to the door.

STUART
George! I seem to be trapped in the Fridgedaire!
(beat)
George! Mom! Dad! It's chilly in here!

Stuart waits for a response - none comes.

Stuart climbs onto the top shelf with the milk and the orange juice. He can see his breath materialize in the air. Stuart begins to shiver.

He climbs onto the butter tray and begins to do jumping jacks to keep warm.

On the fifth jumping jack, Stuart slips on the icy butter and stumbles back into a bowl of salad. Buried in the lettuce. Stuart slowly emerges using one of the largest lettuce leaves as a blanket. He wraps himself tightly and waits. He looks around in the darkness as the SOUND OF THE MOTOR SIGNALS THE PUMPING OF MORE FREEZING AIR INTO THE SPACE.

Beat. Stuart begins to cry.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Mr. Little walks into the kitchen. Looks around at the open cabinets. Shakes his head.

MR. LITTLE
George.

Mr Little begins closing the cabinets. He closes the last one and moves to the refrigerator. He pulls a carton of milk. Starts to close the door when SOMETHING CATCHES HIS EYE.

MR. LITTLE
Stuart!

Mr. Little reaches in and pulls out his super-chilled son. Mrs. Little and George hear the commotion and appear in the kitchen a few seconds later.

Mrs. Little spots Stuart as Mr. Little places him on the kitchen counter.

MRS. LITTLE
Stuart, you look somewhat like a popsicle!

Stuart is stiff - his tears are frozen in the tiniest drops on his face. His tail is frozen like an iron rod. The lettuce around his shoulders is brittle and cracked.

STUART
(soft)
I was trapped in the family refrigerator.

MRS. LITTLE
George Little you trapped your brother!

GEORGE
It wasn't my fault.

STUART
It wasn't his fault.

THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH A FAMILY MEMBER WHO CAN GET LOST IN THE FRIDGE.

Mr. Little presses his index finger to Stuart's forehead.

MR. LITTLE
He's burning up!

Mr. Little puts out his hand. Stuart crawls into it. Rests his head against his father's thumb and closes his eyes.

Mr and Mrs. Little give each other very worried looks. They glance to George disappointed. George storms out of the kitchen. The Littles HEAR THE DOOR TO THE BASEMENT SLAM A FEW SECONDS LATER.

GEORGE FEELS HE'S MR.T

CUT TO:

INT HALL - NIGHT

DR BEECHWOOD, the Little family doctor, steps out from Stuart's room. Closes the door

DR. BEECHWOOD
His temperature is dropping.

Mrs. Little is greatly relieved. Mr. Little drowns in his thoughts.

DR. BEECHWOOD
Now I don't want you to blame yourselves.

MRS. LITTLE
This was so very shocking and unexpected.

DR. BEECHWOOD
These type of things are eventually going to happen.

MR. LITTLE
Maybe he should wear a bell. that way, we'll know where he'll be.

Mrs. Little's eyes are raw from crying. She squeezes Mr. Little's hand tightly.

DR. BEECHWOOD
It's a complicated thing. Stuart is a mouse. He'll always be a mouse. And this home, this is a human home. It has human size doors, human size windows, human size refrigerators.
(beat)
I'm not saying it can't work. I'm just saying it's not going to be easy.

MR. LITTLE
We don't mind it being difficult.

MRS. LITTLE
No we don't mind.

DR. BEECHWOOD
I hope I'm not being rude for saying so... but you're not the ones it's going to be difficult on.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stuart is asleep in his matchbox bed. He shivers a tiny bit in his sleep.

Mrs. Little reaches in and pulls his covers up.

Mr. and Mrs. Little stand in the darkness. Beat.

MRS. LITTLE
(whispers)
He looks... He looks even...

MR. LITTLE
(whispers)
Tinier today.

MRS. LITTLE
(whispers)
Yes, very tiny.

They don't say another word. The Littles just gaze down with deep concern at the small sickly mouse laying curled under his napkin blanket.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FRONT DOOR - DAY

The door swings open. A gathering of people are waiting on the stairs. Presents held in their arms.

MRS. LITTLE
You weren't lost were you?

UNCLE CLARENCE
No Little in the history of Littles has ever lost their way to Little house.

MRS. LITTLE
Something inside.

UNCLE CLARENCE
Yes, something inside.

UNCLE CLARENCE steps forward.

UNCLE CLARENCE
So where is he?

Mrs. Little smiles shyly.

MRS. LITTLE
He's in the drain.

CUT TO:

EXT. KITCHEN - DAY

Snowbell stands at the open back door of the kitchen. Three skinny scrawny cats stand outside. They are, BENNY, VINNY, AND TOMMY.

BENNY
How's it going Snow?

VINNY
What's up Snow?

TOMMY
How's it hanging Snow?

SNOWBELL
Same old, same old.

BENNY
Sal wants you to cruise with us tonight.

Benny points a paw to a very large cat seated on a trashcan in the shadows behind them. SAL'S imposing figure nods slightly to Snowbell as they all look.

SNOWBELL

I can't. I gotta work a party tonight.

VINNY
Don't be a mama's cat.

BENNY
Leave him alone Vinny.

TOMMY
Least he's got a job.

VINNY
I'll say what I want. You got a problem with that?

BENNY
You want a piece of me?

TOMMY
You want to throw paws?

SNOWBELL
Listen, tell Sal, next time. The mouse son is having a birthday party. They said I have to work the room.

BENNY
Alright, we gotta roll then.

VINNY
Don't work too hard Snow.

SNOWBELL
Don't worry I won't.

The skinny scrawny cats move across the backyard to Sal. They wait for Sal to hop down before following in a triangle formation behind the massive cat. They move as a gang down a back alley.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Little and a dozen cousins, uncles and aunts are crammed into the bathroom. They're all hunched over the sink.

MRS. LITTLE
Stuart, are you still there or have you been washed away to the sea?

STUART(o.s.)
I'm still here mother.

MR. LITTLE
Why don't you come out now Stuart? It must be awfully messy down there.

STUART(o.s.)
It isn't very sanitary.

MRS. LITTLE
Everyone's here, waiting. They're all so excited to meet you.

Beat.

STUART(o.s.)
What if I don't fit in?

MRS. LITTLE
Oh Stuart.

MR. LITTLE
They're your family. You always fit in with your family.

A long beat where every Little just stares at the darkness of the drain.

A tiny hand reaches out. Mr. and Mrs. Little sigh in relief.

Stuart's head finally appears. His big eyes look up at the countless faces staring down at him.

EVERYONE
Hello Stuart!

Stuart's head, sticking out of the drain, smiles softly.

STUART
Hello everyone.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

The room is packed with Littles. Uncles, aunts, cousins, second cousins, all of them crowd around the table.

On the table sits a Birthday cake. Stuart stands on a paper cup turned upside down.

MRS. LITTLE
Let's blow out the candle lights.

STUART
George. Where's George?

Mrs. Little looks to Mr. Little who moves into the hall and opens the basement door.

MR. LITTLE
George. Your brother's blowing out the candle lights.

George emerges from the stairs and follows his father into the living room.

Stuart smiles when he sees George.

Mr. Little moves to Stuart and lifts him on his palm. He places him at the first candle.

Stuart closes his eyes and blows. He's carried from candle to candle. After the tenth candle is blown out, everyone CLAPS.

Stuart smiles big. His eyes catch George leaving the room. He watches his brother open the basement door and disappear down the stairs.

Stuart hides his disappointment.

Mrs. Little picks him up.

MRS. LITTLE
Who wants to open presents?

STUART
Me!

CUT TO:

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Snowbell purrs and walks around the room.

SNOWBELL
Meow, meow.

Snowbell rolls over on his back.

SNOWBELL
(half-heartedly)
Won't someone please
scratch my cute tummy?

Two children spot Snowbell from across the room. They point.

CHILD #1
The cat!

CHILD #2
Let's get him!

Snowbell's eyes go wide as he spots the children rushing towards him.

SNOWBELL
Undisciplined children. Oh
no.

Snowbell leaps to his feet.

SNOWBELL
Coffee break. I'll be back.

With that, Snowbell bolts out of the room. The two children hot on his tail.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The multi-colored wrapping paper gets torn away. Stuart gapes with surprise at the bulbous plastic head of a Ben doll dressed in a sailor's outfit.

STUART
Sea-faring Ben!

The crowd CLAPS THEIR APPROVAL. Mrs. Little places the new doll next to a line of other Ben doll gifts. Laying still next to "Sea-faring Ben" are "Safari Ben", "Ballroom Ben" and "Job Interview Ben."

Stuart starts to open his next gift with great excitement.

Mr. Little leans into Mrs. Little.

MR. LITTLE
(whispers)
This party was a fine idea.

MRS. LITTLE
I'm so happy he's happy.

The wrapping comes off. Stuart's eyes go wide as he stares at another plastic bulbous head.

STUART
Barbados Ben!

CUT TO:

INT. HALL - DAY

A piano sits against the hallway wall. A fluffy white tail juts out from the lid of the piano. THE SOUND OF PIANO CORDS BEING STRUCK FILLS THE HALL.

SNOWBELL'S VOICE GRUMBLES FROM INSIDE.

SNOWBELL(o.s.)
A birthday party for a mouse... Great idea.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

The end of dinner. All the family members are seated at the dining table and two smaller tables.

Stuart is seated next to a water glass at the head of the table. Mr. and Mrs. Little sit on either side of him.

Stuart smiles at Mrs. Little then TAPS the side of the glass with his miniature spoon. Everyone slowly turns their attention to the birthday boy.

Stuart stands. Clears his throat.

STUART
This was the finest birthday I've ever had. In the orphanage we would tell fairy tales of finding our families and having a birthday like this. A birthday with presents and all varieties of meatloaf.

Stuart looks to Mrs. Little who's all teary eyed.

STUART
A birthday with a big family who came from far away just to wish us well.
(beat)
I don't know much about families, but you must be one of the nicest families in the world I think.

Everyone eats up Stuart's words.

STUART
So I just wanted to thank each of you because... well because-

MR. LITTLE
You liked all the presents?

Beat.

STUART
No. Because now I know,
fairy tales are real.

MR. LITTLE
(surprised)
Oh.

Beat.

UNCLE CLARENCE
Frederick you guessed
wrong.
(to Stuart)
Frederick knows what every
Little is going to say.
(beat)
Well, not every Little I guess.

Stuart looks suddenly uncomfortable as he glances around quietly.

STUART
(soft)
Thank you all for coming.

Stuart quickly takes his seat. Mrs. Little leans into Stuart.

MRS. LITTLE
That was very beautiful, dear.

Stuart forces a smile.

Beat. An awkward moment passes between Mr. Little, Mrs. Little, and Stuart.

Uncle Clarence and the rest of the family members go back to their conversations and desserts.

Mr. and Mrs. Little return their eyes to their plates.

Stuart sits quietly for a while. His eyes pass over the many faces at the table. He studies their profiles. All the Littles look so much the same. Like a set.

Stuart's eyes linger over the faces of the Littles. His eyes float to Mrs. Little's WATER GLASS seated next to him. It towers threes inches above his head.

Stuart looks into the curved glass... Sees his reflection. His mouse ears, and mouse nose, and mouse whiskers all distorted and cartoon like.

Stuart looks away quickly.

CUT TO:

INT. MR. AND MRS. LITTLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

LIGHTS OUT. Mr. and Mrs. Little are fast asleep.

Mrs. Little rolls over. A SMALL YELP IS HEARD UNDER THE SHEETS. It startles Mrs. Little who pulls back the blankets to reveal Stuart laying next to her.

MRS. LITTLE
Stuart! Did I crush you?

STUART
No Mother, you didn't crush me.

MRS. LITTLE
Why aren't you asleep?

STUART
I've been thinking and thinking.

MRS. LITTLE
Do you want to sleep here? We don't think much in this room. We can bring your matchbox bed in here tonight?

STUART
I want to ask you questions.

MRS. LITTLE
What sort of questions?

STUART
The very important sort.

Mrs. Little studies Stuart and then turns and shakes Mr. Little.

MRS. LITTLE
Frederick wake up. Stuart's here. He wants to ask us questions of the important sort.

Mr. Little rubs his eyes and sits up.

MR. LITTLE
What is it Stuart?

Beat.

STUART
I was wondering whether you knew anything at all about my real family... The ones I look like.

Beat. There's a long silence. Then Stuart gets stunned as a DROP OF WATER EXPLODES ON HIS HEAD. He's soaked. He looks up to find Mrs. Little crying.

STUART
Oh dear.

MRS. LITTLE
You hate us!

Mrs. Little reaches for a tissue on her bed side table. Stuart has to move around to avoid the assault of teardrops falling all around him.

MR. LITTLE
Is that true? Do you hate us Stuart?

STUART
No! No! You're the kindest people I've ever met.

Beat. Mrs. Little slowly stops crying.

MRS. LITTLE
Then why do you want to know about your real family?

STUART
It's just that I feel an empty space inside me. Something's missing. I want to know what was there before.

MRS. LITTLE
You have an empty space?

Stuart nods, "Yes."

MRS. LITTLE
That's so sad!

Mrs. Little's eyes fill with water. Stuart braces himself.

STUART
Oh dear.

Mr. Little touches Mrs. Little's hand. Mrs. Little's eyes look like they're just about to burst. She holds it back. Beat.

STUART
I hope I didn't make you both feel dismayed and disappointed inside. You've been so wonderful to me.

MR. LITTLE
No we don't feel dismayed and disappointed.

STUART
Are you sure?

MR. LITTLE
We're certain Stuart.

Mrs. Little nods her agreement.

MR. LITTLE
We'll help you find out about them if it'll make you happy.

STUART
I think it will.

No one says anything for a while. Silence fills the bedroom.

STUART
Are you sure this is okay?

They both nod, "Yes" in unison. Stuart studies them carefully. Beat.

STUART
Okay, goodnight then.

MR. LITTLE
Goodnight Stuart.

Mrs. Little nods. Stuart hops down from the bed. Turns around. Sees Mr. and Mrs. Little seated in bed watching him. Stuart smiles and waves goodnight as he leaves the room.

Mr. and Mrs. Little sit like statues and stare at the doorway. Beat.

MRS. LITTLE
Frederick.

MR. LITTLE
Yes dear.

Beat.

MRS. LITTLE
I'm so dismayed and disappointed!

MR. LITTLE
Me too dear.

Mrs. Little starts bawling. Mr. Little hands her a tissue.

CUT TO:

INT. ADOPTION OFFICE - DAY

Mrs. Keeper stares across her desk.

MRS. KEEPER
It's out of the question.

MRS. LITTLE
But he has an empty space.

MRS. KEEPER
It's against the rules.
(beat)
And anyway, it's very difficult to track mouse families.
(she leans in)
They're not good with paper work.

Beat.

MRS. KEEPER
Are there problems at home?

MRS. LITTLE
Problems. Oh no. Not problems.

MR. LITTLE
I think Stuart just has some questions about families that's all.

MRS. LITTLE
But it's not a problem.

MR. LITTLE
Oh no.

MRS. KEEPER
Are you sure these questions aren't doubts?

MRS. LITTLE
Oh no, doubts are much more serious. These are just questions.

MR. LITTLE
Definitely not doubts.

Beat.

MRS. LITTLE
He just wants to know about his family. Any child would have questions about that.

MR. LITTLE
Knowing about his parents will make him happy. Can you help us make Stuart happy?

MRS. LITTLE
Yes, can you?

Mrs. Keeper looks into the pleading eyes of Mr. and Mrs. Little. Beat.

MRS. KEEPER
I'll see what I can do.

CUT TO:

EXT. ORPHANAGE - AFTERNOON

Mrs. Keeper watches as Mr. and Mrs. Little get in their car and pull away. A secretary stands next to her in the doorway. Mrs. Keeper whispers as the Little-mobile moves down the street.

MRS. KEEPER
These things never work out.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Stuart is seated at the big bay window looking out over the street. He looks from one end of the street to the other and then sighs.

CUT TO.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Stuart carefully climbs onto the kitchen table and takes a seat on a pile of coasters. He sits and watches quietly as Snowbell, Benny, Vinny, and Tommy raid the milk and meats from the fridge.

Benny glances over to the kitchen table and freezes.

BENNY
Snow, we got company.

Snowbell and the cats all turn to Stuart who smiles back softly.

STUART
Hello everyone.

SNOWBELL
What do you think you're doing?

STUART
Watching all of you.

SNOWBELL
Well, you didn't see nothing alright.

STUART
But I did see something.

SNOWBELL
I'm telling you, you didn't see anything. You didn't see Benny. You didn't see Vinny. And you didn't see Tommy.

Beat.

STUART
I did see Benny. I did see Vinny. And I did see Tommy.

The cats look at each other.

SNOWBELL
Am I stuttering? Did I stutter?
(to Stuart)

SNOWBELL
Listen, you didn't see me and my friends taking milk and all varieties of meatloaf from the fridge.

STUART
But that's exactly what I saw.

BENNY
He's getting smart with us.

TOMMY
You want some of this mouse?

STUART
Some of what?

VINNY
You want us to come over there?

STUART
You can come over here if you want. There's plenty of seats.

The cats just stare in disbelief.

BENNY
You were right Snow. He is a trouble maker.

SNOWBELL
You got no respect. You know that?

Snowbell lowers his head and leaps across the room onto the kitchen table. Stuart catches his balance as the table shakes. Benny, Vinny, and Tommy leap across the room soon after - rocking the table as they land.

Stuart stands and stares at the gang of cats.

STUART
I seem to have upset you all.

Stuart steps back to the edge of the table as Snowbell moves forward. Stuart's foot slips, he almost falls off the table. Stuart gathers himself.

STUART
I apologize.

Snowbell lowers on his back legs - preparing to pounce. Beat.

STUART
I'm glad that's settled. I feel a great deal better.

Snowbell's ears fold back - his mouth opens - exposing his teeth. A LOW HISS FILLS THE AIR...

STUART
(shaky)
You really shouldn't do anything strenuous for a half an hour after you eat.

Stuart turns to the edge of the table - pretends to be calm.

Snowbell EXPLODES LIKE A CANNON - taking the length of the table in one leap. Stuart doesn't have time to think. He jumps from the table.

STUART
Oh dear.

He lands with an unexpected thump on the kitchen chair. The CHAIR GETS ROCKED as Snowbell crashes into the back of it.

Stuart barely maintains his balance and jumps to the next kitchen chair. Benny leaps down from the table onto the chair.

Stuart jumps to the kitchen floor. Vinny and Tommy LAND ON THE KITCHEN TILES A SECOND LATER.

Stuart makes a mad dash across the kitchen. He scurries to the end of the room and finds himself cornered. He turns. Snowbell, Benny, Vinny, and Tommy charge right at him.

Stuart looks up and sees an open kitchen drawer. The brass handle hanging high over his head. He springs straight up as the cats come sliding across the tiles into the place Stuart stood just a fraction of a second before.

Stuart's tiny hands clutch the handle of the drawer. He looks down and sees Snowbell's ears fold back as he prepares to leap straight up... Stuart starts climbing into the drawer...

Snowbell explodes into the air.

Stuart tumbles into the drawer... Snowbell hits the drawer hard a second later. The drawer starts to close.

Stuart is on his back in a pile of things and watches as the LIGHT FROM THE ROOM QUICKLY GETS COVERED BY DARKNESS. The drawer closes with a THUD.

Snowbell lands back on the kitchen tiles next to the rest of the gang. They all stare up at the closed drawer.

SNOWBELL
Hey Stuart...

STUART lays in the darkness of the drawer. SNOWBELLS' VOICE ECHOES THROUGH THE DRAWER.

SNOWBELL
I bet you don't see anything anymore.

Stuart LISTENS AS SNOWBELL AND HIS FRIENDS LEAVE THE KITCHEN. THEIR SNICKERING FADES AWAY TO SILENCE.

Stuart sits amongst the clutter of odds and ends in the drawer. STUART'S TINY VOICE BARELY ESCAPES FROM THE DRAWER.

STUART
Oh dear.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DRAWER - AFTERNOON

FOOTSTEPS. EVERYTHING STARTS TO SHAKE. A BURST OF LIGHT as the drawer opens.

Stuart blinks his eyes. HIS VISION STARTS TO CLEAR. GEORGE'S FACE PEERS DOWN AT HIM.

GEORGE
I didn't know you like to sit in drawers.

STUART
This is my first time.

GEORGE
How was it?

STUART
I think I'd prefer more room.

GEORGE
Maybe you should sit in a cupboard? Or even sit in a cabinet?

STUART
Perhaps a closet would be nice?

GEORGE
A closet would be very comfortable.

Stuart starts to climb out of the drawer.

GEORGE
While you were in there, you didn't happen to see a tube of quick drying clear glue goo did you?

STUART
A tube of quick drying clear glue goo... Yes I did. It's in the back, next to the key chain with the pair of purple palm trees on it.

George reaches in and pulls out the tube of quick drying clear glue goo. He examines it.

GEORGE
This will work. Yes, this is just what I needed.

George looks to Stuart and for the first time, sees the sadness in his face.

GEORGE
Is everything okay?

STUART
Yes, I'll be fine.

The two brothers stand in awkward silence.

GEORGE
I have to go down to the basement now.

Stuart nods. George starts to walk away. He turns and looks back to Stuart who stands still on the kitchen counter.

GEORGE
You want to come down with me?

Stuart stares quietly. He smiles at George.

STUART
Really?

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - AFTERNOON

We see a lump squirming in George's shirt pocket.

STUART
Can I look now?

GEORGE
Yes, you can look now.

Stuart's head pops out of George's pocket. His big eyes grow even bigger than they normally are as he stares agape at the sight before him.

THE BASEMENT IS FILLED WITH MINIATURES. Tiny cars, houses, boats... all intricately made and proudly displayed.

George carefully takes Stuart from his pocket and places him on one of the display tables. For the first time, Stuart looks just right size in his surroundings.

Stuart walks up to an airplane body that's being worked on. He touches the exterior of the plane with great reverence.

STUART
You did this?

GEORGE
Yes.

STUART
You made these?

GEORGE
Yes.

STUART
By yourself?

GEORGE
Yes.

STUART
That's what you do in the basement?

George nods, "Yes."

GEORGE
I like to do things alone.

Stuart's eyes are filled with awe.

GEORGE
You like them?

Stuart turns and faces George.

STUART
This is how I dream the world looks in fairy tales.

George looks at Stuart a little differently.

GEORGE
Wow.

Stuart starts walking around the tables, moving between the many miniatures. He comes to a stop in front of a tall sailing ship.

GEORGE
I call it The Wasp.

STUART
The Wasp.

GEORGE
I made it for Mom and Dad. I'm going to race it in the park.

STUART
I bet it'll sail straight and true.

GEORGE
And far and fast.

STUART
They'll be very proud.

Stuart follows George around the table. Stuart stops cold when he comes to a tiny car. Its smooth dark lines and shiny bumpers captivate him.

GEORGE
It's a model T.

STUART
It's the finest model T I've ever seen.

Stuart gently opens the car door and takes a seat inside.

GEORGE
(surprised)
It's like it was made for you.

Stuart puts his hands on the wheel and looks at himself in the car.

STUART
This is the first time I've fit in since I've been a Little.

Beat.

GEORGE
I know how you feel. Sometimes I don't fit in either.

STUART
You don't?

The two youngsters sit in silence amongst the many miniature models.

GEORGE
Maybe being a Little takes some time.

STUART
Maybe.

George starts working on his models in silence. Stuart watches him quietly.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING - ROOM

The Littles are halfway through dinner. Snowbell is on the floor sipping at a bowl of milk.

STUART

So no one knows anything?

MRS. LITTLE
No.

STUART
And they don't know where to find them?

MRS. LITTLE
No.
(beat)
But they'll try.

Stuart falls into silence.

Mr. and Mrs. Little exchange sad looks. Beat. George looks up from his plate.

GEORGE
I'm going to race The Wasp in the pond at the park tomorrow.

STUART
It's going to race straight and true.

Mr. and Mrs. Little look up from their plates in unison.

MRS. LITTLE
You like boats?

Stuart looks to George and smiles.

STUART
The Wasp is the finest boat I've ever seen.

MR. LITTLE
George maybe Stuart can help you race the Wasp straight and true?

MRS. LITTLE
Yes, maybe we all can go together?

STUART
All of us? Like a family?

MRS. LITTLE
(tearing up)
Like a family?

GEORGE
All four of us?

MRS. LITTLE
It'll be the first time we all go out together... Like our first, our first...

MR. LITTLE
Family outing.

MRS. LITTLE
Yes, our first family outing.

Everybody waits for George's answer. George stares down at his plate for a long time. Beat.

GEORGE
Okay.

Mrs. Little is about to gush into tears. Mr. Little nods his head and holds her hand. Stuart's face is all aglow.

MR. LITTLE
That's settled. Pass the milk.

MRS. LITTLE
We're out of milk.

GEORGE
Again?

Stuart sits very still. He tries not to look up. Beat. He looks like he's going to burst. And he does. He stands up and shouts.

STUART
I didn't see anything! I didn't see Snowbell and his unemployed friends taking milk and all varieties of meatloaf from the family refrigerator without permission!

Beat. One by one, everyone turns to Snowbell in the corner of the room. Snowbell slowly looks up and sees the many disapproving faces staring at him.

SNOWBELL
(nervous)
Meow, meow.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK WALL - EVENING

SAL, the overweight tom cat, sits in the shadows on the cement wall. Benny, Vinny and Tommy sit on the wall with him.

Snowbell hops up on the wall and takes a seat with his rough looking friends.

BENNY
Hey Snow, how many scratches you got?

SNOWBELL
Who wants to know?

VINNY
We want to know who has the most scratches besides Sal.

Vinny hikes a claw in Sal's direction. Sal just sits like a statue in the shadows.

BENNY
Tommy says he got three, but we don't buy it.

TOMMY
You calling me a liar? Is that what you're doing?

VINNY
What are you? A tough guy?

TOMMY
You want to go paw to paw?

SAL
If you punks don't shut your traps, I'm gonna scratch all of yous out.

Sal moves out of the darkness. The posse of cats become very still. Sal is almost twice as large as any of the other cats. Sal walks up to Snowbell.

SAL
What's wrong young cat? You got the sad look?

SNOWBELL
Families stink Sal, that's all.

TOMMY
Yeah, families stink.

BENNY
Why do they stink?

SNOWBELL
Cause I said so! That's why!

Sal puts a heavy paw around Snowbell.

SAL
Young Snowbell here, his parents walked out on him when he was a kitten. Didn't even say goodbye.

TOMMY
They didn't even say goodbye?

SNOWBELL
I don't want to talk about it.

Beat.

SAL
I know what'll cheer you up... Let's hit the park.

SNOWBELL
And do what?

SAL
What we always do. Anything evil and unnecessary.

SNOWBELL
Oh yeah.

Sal leaps off the wall. The gang of cats spring after him into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK PATH - NIGHT

An unsuspecting man rides his bicycle down a park path. He has a contented look on his face as he continues his leisurely ride.

AND THEN FIVE FUR COVERED STREAKS OF FURY ERUPT FROM THE BUSHES. Sal and his gang leap out into the middle of the path HISSING AND SCREECHING.

The bicyclist totally freaks. He jerks the bike. Swerves hard to avoid the cats. He goes screaming down a slope and crashes into a set of bushes.

Sal and his posse race off through the park.

CUT TO:

EXT CENTRAL PARK PICNIC AREA - NIGHT

A "Keep your park beautiful. Don't litter" sign hangs between two poles. It gets torn to shreds by Benny, Vinny and Tommy.

They leave the picnic area covered in bits and pieces, completely devastated.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK LAWN - NIGHT

A family of pigeons rests on an area of grass. They get terrorized as Snowbell tears across the lawn. The father, mother and three children explode into the air, wings and feathers desperately rush to get away.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK WALKWAY - NIGHT

A set of trash cans lay on their sides. Their contents spilling out onto the walkways.

We find Snowbell balanced on the edge of the last standing trash can. He rocks back and forth, till the can starts to tilt. It starts to fall, Snowbell leaps off just as the can crashes to the walkway and spills all its paper bags and Coke cans out.

BENNY(o.s.)
Hey Snow check it out!

Snowbell looks over to find Sal and the gang on a park bench surrounding another cat who looks very frightened.

Snowbell strides over and jumps up on the bench.

SAL
Cleve Johnson, where you
been hiding?

VINNY
Cleve's been declawed.

SAL
Say it ain't so Cleve.

Cleve lowers his head in shame.

CLEVE
There was nothing I could do.

CLEVE is a sad, frail looking cat. He looks at Sal with fear in his eyes.

CLEVE
I've been having trouble collecting Sal. Since the operation.

SAL
Am I supposed to be having an emotional breakdown here?

CLEVE
I can't make my payments Sal. I need some time Sal.

Beat. Sal goes cold.

TOMMY
You want me to scratch him out?

Tommy shows his razor sharp claws. Cleve looks terrified. Beat.

Sal just stares hard at Cleve.

SAL
Young Snowbell come here.

SNOWBELL
Me?

SAL
Did I stutter?

Snowbell tentatively approaches.

SAL
Cleve, look at young Snowbell. You see he has the sad look?

CLEVE
(trembling)
I guess so.

SAL
Cleve I'm going to ask you one question. I hope you answer right cause if you do, it'll make young Snowbell happy and that'll make me happy.

CLEVE
(soft)
What's the question Sal?

Beat.

SAL
What's your opinion on families?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK POND - MORNING

The Park starts to come alive in the morning, filling with people and sunlight.

The Central Park Pond is about a quarter of a mile in width and is lined by full green trees on all sides.

A battalion of ducks cruise the pond and watch as the gathering of humans increases in numbers.

The wind causes the surface of the water to ripple.

One side of the pond starts to get lined with miniature boats and their owners.

The Littles arrive with a wave of people. George holds The Wasp carefully in his hands. Mr. and Mrs. Little look around at the crowds.

Stuart emerges from the pocket of Mr. Little. Stuart looks around at the beautiful pond in total awe. He whispers to himself.

STUART
It's so much prettier on this side of the window.

Beat.

GEORGE
Let's go, we have to get ready.

George leads the Littles through the crowd to the starter's line.

CUT TO:

EXT. STARTER'S LINE - MORNING

The Wasp is mounted on two pieces of wood by the edge of the water. Stuart is on board. He's clearly excited to be helping his brother.

George is kneeling by the boat with a remote control.

GEORGE
Rudder.

George hits a button on the control. Stuart leans over the edge and watches as the rudder moves.

STUART
Check.

GEORGE
Sail.

George presses a knob on the control. Stuart watches as the sail folds and unfolds.

STUART
Check.

Mrs. Little leans into Mr. Little.

MRS. LITTLE
They're doing checks.

Mr. Little nods.

GEORGE
Dad, can you help me put The Wasp in the water?

Stuart climbs down off the boat. George hands Stuart the REMOTE CONTROL. It's almost as big as him. Stuart holds it with both hands. He can barely see over it.

George and Mr. Little carefully lift the boat off the wood blocks and lean over the edge of the water.

Stuart staggers a little as the weight of the control starts to get to him. He drifts into the walking lane where spectators walk by in droves.

Mrs. Little watches George and Mr. Little place The Wasp into the water. No one notices Stuart who has to quickly move and dodge the many gigantic shoes that walk all around him.

STUART
Oh dear...

Stuart gets bumped by a man's pant leg. Stumbles. The remote falls out of his hands. A MAN WEARING HUGE BOOTS DOESN'T SEE THE CONTROL LAYING ON THE GROUND.

STUART
Look out sir!

George, Mr. Little and Mrs. Little turn when they hear the CRUNCH. They look in shock as Stuart stands next to a pile of crushed metal parts that used to be the remote control. The man with the boots disappears into the waves of people.

George's eyes fill with tears.

STUART
It was completely my fault. I
couldn't grip it.

Mr. Little puts his arm around George. Mrs. Little lets out a large sigh. All four of the Littles stand in silence at the edge of the pond. Beat.

STUART
I've ruined our first family
outing.

MRS. LITTLE
No, no. You mustn't say that.

George wipes his eyes.

STUART
(to himself)
I'm a terrible brother.

George looks at The Wasp sitting majestically in the water. Stuart comes over and joins him. Mr. and Mrs. Little add to the sad gaze as they all watch the boat bob in the pond. Beat.

George looks devastated. Stuart looks crushed. Mr. and Mrs. Little look miserable. And then Stuart's expression changes as he stares at The Wasp. His big eyes stare out at the majestic sails.

STUART
George.

GEORGE
Yeah Stuart.

Beat.

STUART
There is one other possibility.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

A group of people have a picnic on an open field. Frisbees and footballs fly through the air.

A pack of children run up the hill to their families. They burst with excitement.

CHILDREN
Come down to the pond!...
Hurry! Hurry!

The footballs and Frisbees stop. The children drag their parents and families down the hill.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUSHES - DAY

People rush by a group of bushes. Something STIRS IN THE FOLIAGE. Snowbell stumbles out. He looks hung over. Tiny bits of twigs and leaves cling to his fur.

GEORGE
What are you thinking Stuart?

Stuart turns to George.

STUART
I sincerely hope we win. Mom and Dad will be so very happy.

CUT TO:

EXT. POND - DAY

A gentleman carrying a flag with a sail boat painted on it climbs the cement wall surrounding the pond... He raises the flag.

Six boats are lined up at the starting line... The Wasp with Stuart at the wheel is one of them. Stuart braces himself.

The crowd watches anxiously.

THE FLAG WHIPS DOWN...

The boats push off from the edge with an EXPLOSION OF CHEERS.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOAT - DAY

Stuart clings to the wheel with both hands... The sail FLAPS in the wind above him.

Tiny spray from the pond flies in Stuart's face - he wipes his vision clear.

DISCARDED PEANUT SHELLS on the surface of the water are thrown onboard. Stuart ducks the airborne shrapnel as it clears the decks.

Stuart glances around, sees all the boats sailing side by side.

CUT TO:

EXT. POND EDGE - DAY

Police try their best to keep the surging crowd away from the wall.

OFFICER MULLIGAN hoists himself onto the cement wall. He turns to the crowd.

OFFICER MULLIGAN
I am an officer of the law.
For your own safety would
everyone please take one step
back-

Officer Mulligan doesn't get to finish his sentence... He loses his balance and FALLS BUTT FIRST INTO THE WATER. The impact is colossal. His enormous weight creates a record breaking splash. The crowd nearest the edge gets soaked.

THE SPLASH DRAWS THE ATTENTION of everyone along the elliptical pond.

CUT TO:

EXT. FINISH LINE SIDE OF THE POND - DAY

George's eyes light up. He turns from the direction of the officer in the water to the set of sail boats and yells with everything in his lungs.

GEORGE
Tidal Wave!

CUT TO:

EXT. BOAT - DAY

Stuart looks to the shore. Sees George pointing desperately to the far end of the pond. Stuart turns in that direction. His tail goes still as he sees two things... Officer Mulligan climbing out of the pond and...

A HUGE SET OF WAVES HEADING RIGHT FOR THE BOATS. Stuart quickly turns the wheel and starts away.

THE POWERFUL WAVES glide across the surface of the pond. The crowd watches as the first set of boats get swallowed by the waves. A devastating impact causing two boats to capsize.

Stuart's boat is next to get hit. He braces himself - his tail wraps around the base of the steering column.

The WATER CRASHES DOWN across the deck... Stuart holds steady to the wheel... the boat starts to tip but hangs on - riding on a slant as the smaller waves ram against the sides.

The remaining boats get hit - each one with less damage.

The Wasp slowly starts to straighten itself. Stuart is panting and soaked. He catches his breath and watches the waves travel harmlessly away from the boats.

Stuart looks back to the shore. He sees George still waving frantically. Stuart holds up his hands.

STUART
All clear!

George keeps waving like a mad man. Stuart's brow crinkles as he tries to understand the message. Stuart finally gives up and turns back to face the front of the boat.

Beat. Stuart's tail goes still again as THE SHIP GETS SWALLOWED INTO DARKNESS.

CUT TO:

EXT. POND EDGE - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Little gasp as they watch Stuart's boat sail right into a POPCORN PAPER BAG that was floating on the water.

The other boats start to pull away.

CUT TO:

EXT. STARTING AREA - DAY

George watches anxiously. The other boat owners around him can't hold back their glee.

George doesn't react at first. He just stares with worried eyes across the water - then the laughter around him stops.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOAT - DAY

The front of The Wasp is in the mouth of the paper bag.

Stuart's head suddenly emerges through the paper - his mouse teeth chew away at the bag creating a hole that begins to tear. The rip travels along the seam - splitting the paper bag in half.

The Wasp pierces through the opening in the bag and sails free.

THE CHEERS FROM THE SHORE RISE IN A POWERFUL WAVE THAT REACHES STUART as he focuses on the ships now sailing ahead of him.

The Lillian B Womrath is in the lead.

Stuart lowers his head and sails his way closer and closer to the pack of ships.

A gust of wind helps all the ships pick up speed. They cross the middle point of the pond.

Stuart catches up to the pack.. Only the Lillian B Womrath has a nose lead.

The pack gains on her.

Just as it looks like it will be a four way race for the final half, the Lillian B Womrath starts veering sharply to the side.

Stuart starts spinning the wheel madly, trying to avoid the impact.

The two other sailboats are forced into each other. Their sails get tangled up. They come to a dead stop in the middle of the pond.

The Lillian B. Womrath rushes up against the side of The Wasp. The two boats move at an angle across the pond.

Stuart feels SOMETHING ELSE HIT the side of The WASP. He leans over the edge and spots a FADED MINIATURE STEERING WHEEL emerge from the water below. He looks at it curiously, and then realizes. Stuart looks ahead in the direction the two jockeying boats are moving...

THE WATER IN THE AREA JUST AHEAD BECOMES MORE AND MORE ROUGH UNTIL IT REACHES A CENTER OF SWIRLING WATER... LEAVES AND TWIGS FLOATING ON THE SURFACE GET SUCKED UNDER.

STUART
(whispers)
The graveyard.

EXT. STARTING LINE - DAY

GEORGE
(scared)
...The graveyard.

CUT TO:

EXT. EDGE OF POND - DAY

Snowbell stands on the edge of the wall.

SNOWBELL
(delighted)
...The graveyard.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOAT - DAY

The two boats start to get pulled into the currents. They move towards the ominous swirl on the surface.

Then Stuart runs across his deck and scurries up the mast. He unties the large sail. It falls to the deck in folds.

The Wasp instantly slows... The Lillian B. Womrath, sails full of wind, shoots like a rocket past The Wasp...

Stuart turns the wheel and steers the slow Wasp back into the center of the pond.

The Lillian B. Womrath, now on its own, gets caught in the Graveyard's lethal center current. It gets pulled around at great speeds. Water starts to wash on its decks... It begins to disappear little by little below the surface.

Stuart pulls on a cord and the sail of The Wasp climbs back up the mast. In a second, the sail fills with life and The Wasp heads for the finish.

The last of the Lillian B. Womrath gets pulled under. With a final gurgle, The Graveyard claims its newest victim.

Snowbell stares out over the pond with disgust.

CUT TO:

EXT. POND - DAY

A gentle breeze carries The Wasp the final length of the pond.

Stuart floats in a dream like state. THE ONLY SOUND HEARD, IS A SOFT WIND.

Stuart sees the many families applauding his arrival on shore. In the center of the melee, he spots Mr. and Mrs. Little as George joins their side. All three are hugging and clapping proudly.

THE CHEERS OF HIS FAMILY FILL STUART'S EARS, AND FILL HIS HEART.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A large SAILING TROPHY sits majestically on the center of the dining room table.

A crowd of friends and neighbors have filled the Little house in celebration. Mrs. Little moves between the guests with paper cups of punch.

SILVER BALLOONS bob around the room.

Snowbell watches the joyous gathering from the hall. He looks the very opposite of joyous.

HONK! Snowbell gets startled by the SOUND. Everyone in the living room looks to the hall as Snowbell makes way for Stuart and George.

They enter in grand fashion. Stuart comes riding in George's miniature car. George walks in beside him. Both boys are wearing tuxedos.

The room erupts in applause as the two brothers move proudly through the room.

Stuart and George arrive at the dining table. George helps Stuart out of the car and onto his shoulder.

GUEST
Let's have a picture!

George and Stuart move to the trophy and pose.

STUART
Let's make it a family
picture!

The crowd coaxes Mr. and Mrs. Little to join them before the trophy. Mr. Little stands on the right side. Mrs. Little stands on the left.

GEORGE
Maybe we should be closer.

Mr. and Mrs. Little look at George surprised.

The four Littles move closer together and smile from ear to ear.

The guest with the camera looks through the eyepiece and hesitates. He pulls the camera away from his eye and stares at them.

All four of the Littles start to lose their smiles.

MR. LITTLE
What's wrong?

CAMERA GUEST
It's just...
(beat)
You four look great together.

Instantly, the smiles are back from ear to ear. The guest brings the camera back up to his eye.

Beat. Stuart's face is glowing. He whispers so only his family can hear.

STUART
This is the happiest moment
of my life.

They wait for the CLICK OF THE CAMERA. It never comes.

THE FRONT DOOR BELL RINGS. Everyone turns. One of the guests goes to open the front door.

Stuart and the Littles watch as the door opens and all eyes go down to the floor where two figures are standing. Two mice.

REGINALD AND CAMILLE STOUT step into the hall. They are dressed formally. They look around at all the staring faces.

REGINALD
Very sorry to interrupt. My name's Reginald Stout. This is my wife Camille Stout... We're looking for Stuart?

Reginald's eyes look at the many questioning faces. Beat.

REGINALD
He's our son.

The place goes DEAD SILENT.

The room full of people slowly turn to a frozen Stuart and the completely speechless Little family.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

All the guests from the party have left. Dying balloons hover just above the floor. Paper cups and plates sprinkle the room.

Mr. and Mrs. Little and George sit with Stuart across from the Stouts.

CAMILLE
Isn't he handsome?

REGINALD
He's very handsome.

Stuart looks away shyly as he sits on the armrest of Mr. Little's chair.

CAMILLE
Do you wear tuxedos all the time?

STUART
No. We had a party. We won a race.

CAMILLE
How splendid?

Beat. Awkward silence.

CAMILLE
I can't believe we're looking
at you.

REGINALD
Me neither.
(beat)
By the way, these are very
tasty nuts.

Reginald takes another handful of minced peanuts from the tiny thimble sitting on the table in front of him.

MRS. LITTLE
Thank you.

REGINALD
Stuart, is there anything you
want to ask us?

Stuart looks to Mr. and Mrs. Little. They nod for him to go ahead.

STUART
Why didn't you want me?

Beat.

CAMILLE
Oh dear.

REGINALD
He is angry at us.

CAMILLE
We thought you'd be angry.

STUART
I'm not angry.

REGINALD
It was a very troubling time for us. We were eating Cheese Whiz three times a day.

CAMILLE
Letting you go, was the toughest choice we ever made.

STUART
It was?

REGINALD
When we heard you were asking about us, we thought it was a miracle. We were so happy.

STUART
You were?

REGINALD
...Now we can be a family again.

The room goes DEAD SILENT after he says this. Beat.

REGINALD
Are these salted? They must be salted.

Reginald inspects the peanuts in his hand before eating them.

MR. LITTLE
Stuart, George... I think we need to talk with the Stouts alone.

Stuart doesn't move. He just stares in a daze. George gently picks him up. He whispers to him.

GEORGE
(whispers)
Mom and Dad will handle it.

George takes Stuart and carries him out of the room. Both Stuart and George look back with worried expressions before they turn the corner.

Mrs. Little waits till the sound of their feet move down the hall.

MRS. LITTLE
I'm afraid there's been a mistake.

REGINALD
Mistake? How so?

MRS. LITTLE
Stuart can't leave with you.

REGINALD
Why?

MRS. LITTLE
Because he's... Because he's...

MR. LITTLE
Loved.

MRS. LITTLE
Yes, he's loved very, very much.

CAMILLE
That's so sweet.

Reginald glances to his wife and then turns back to Littles. When he speaks, tiny pieces of peanuts crumble from his mouth.

REGINALD
If you love him, it means you want the best for him.

MRS. LITTLE
We do.

REGINALD
And the best for him, is to be with us.

REGINALD(cont'd)
See Stuart's a mouse. We're mice. And we're his real parents. He was meant to be with us. He was meant to grow up as a mouse, raised by mice.

MR. LITTLE
But he's our son now.

MRS. LITTLE
And he's George's brother now. We can't... We can't...

MR. LITTLE
Erase that.

MRS. LITTLE
Right, no erasing.

Beat. Reginald wipes his mouth with his suit coat. Camille quickly hands him a napkin. He wipes off his sleeve of the crumbs.

REGINALD
You may feel like he's family, but he'll never really be family. You may not realize it, but I'm sure he does.
(beat)
There's just something you'll never be able to give him, because you're human... A place you'll never be able to fill.

Mrs. Little takes a sharp breath.

MRS. LITTLE
-An empty space?

REGINALD
Exactly. Like an empty space.

Beat. Neither couple says anything for awhile.

REGINALD
We let him go once because we loved him.
(beat)
Now it's your turn.

Mr. and Mrs. Little look like someone hit them with a sledgehammer.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Stuart looks up at Camille and Reginald with big saucer-like eyes.

REGINALD
Stuart, would you like to go on a nice boat and come live with us in our big house and play with all your brothers and sisters? We'll all have such a good time.

STUART
Come live with you?

GEORGE
But Stuart lives here!

MR. LITTLE
George please.

GEORGE
What's going on?

STUART
Mom, Dad, you want me to leave?

Mrs. Little is on the verge of tears. A long beat.

MRS. LITTLE
(whispers)
We just want what's best for you dear.

STUART
I don't understand. I thought I was in a fairy tale.
(beat)
This kind of thing doesn't happen in any fairy tale.

Beat. Reginald takes a seat next to Stuart.

REGINALD
Fairy tales are made up stories. This is real. This is just about where you belong.

Camille takes a seat on the other side of Stuart.

CAMILLE
Come home Stuart.

A balloon floats by. Stuart looks up. He sees the reflection in the silver material. His mouse face looks so sad. Reginald and Camille lean in closer. Their three mouse faces float side by side in the silver balloon. They look like a set.

Beat. Reginald whispers to Stuart as they all three look at their reflections.

REGINALD
See...
(beat)
We belong together.

STUART CLOSES HIS EYES.

TINY TEARS SLIDE DOWN THE REFLECTION OF STUART'S IMAGE IN THE SILVER BALLOON.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Reginald runs his hand over George's miniature car as he gets behind the wheel. He speaks to Camille in the front seat.

REGINALD
...This is one finely crafted automobile.

Stuart sits in the back with his tiny suitcase and looks up to the Little family standing at the top of the stairs.

CAMILLE
It's a lovely house.

STUART
(whispers)
The very first Littles lived there.
(beat)
Every Little in the world knows where it is.

The car starts up.

Stuart manages a tiny wave. Mr. Little is the only one who has the strength to wave back.

Reginald HONKS the horn and starts across the street. Stuart looks back and watches as the Little house become smaller and smaller. The miniature car drives into Central Park.

George turns and runs into the house. He runs straight to the basement door and SLAMS IT as he disappears downstairs.

Mr. Little squeezes Mrs. Little around the shoulders as she starts to cry.

CUT TO:

EXT. FERRY - NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Stout and Stuart stand at a dock with about a dozen other mice. The crowd checks out Stuart's car as they wait.

Reginald points out across the water to A GROUP OF LIGHTS.

REGINALD
That's where home is.

CAMILLE
The children will be so happy
to meet you.

Camille studies Stuart.

CAMILLE
Are you okay Stuart?

STUART
My head's feeling a bit
heavy.

CAMILLE
You can rest soon.

A HORN BLOWS. The mice watch as a huge barge floats towards the docks. The mice gather their belongings.

Stuart makes a face.

STUART
Does anyone else smell an
odor?

Beat. Within seconds, the rest of the mice cover their mouths and noses as the smell from the HUNDRED FOOT TRASH FERRY hits them.

REGINALD
You'll get used to it.

CAMILLE
The ride's only a few
minutes.

The ferry has hundreds of four foot by four foot crushed cubes of trash piled high on its back. It docks for a few moments, as a trash truck at the other end of the barge unloads another pile of garbage onto the ferry.

The mice travelers quickly gather onboard. Reginald drives Stuart and Camille onto the barge.

THE HORN SOUNDS AGAIN as the barge pushes off from the docks.

Stuart turns and watches as the LIGHTS OF MANHATTAN BECOME MORE DISTANT.

Camille leans into Stuart.

CAMILLE
It's pretty isn't it?

Stuart's eyes fill with tears as he watches himself move away from the celestial lights...

STUART
(whispers)
It's the prettiest place in the world I think.

The rest of the ride continues in silence.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Stuart watches quietly from the back seat as the miniature car travels through a beautiful neighborhood of mouse mansions. We see well dressed mice in windows eating feasts in their lavish dining rooms.

The miniature car continues driving into the next neighborhood, filled with large homes, not as big as the mansions. The car doesn't stop.

Stuart's eyes watch as they move through a middle class neighborhood with medium size mouse homes. A few mice are putting out the garbage at the end of their tiny plots of land.

The car keeps driving.

The mouse neighborhoods get smaller and dirtier. Each block more run down than the next.

Stuart takes everything in silently.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

We are in an abandoned construction site. The infrastructure of a building stands half finished.

Pipes and beams, two by fours sprinkle the piles of dug up earth around the skeletal structure.

Stuart's miniature car rolls over wooden planks that lay over dirt.

Stuart eyes the shabby surroundings.

REGINALD
Home sweet home.

Reginald pulls the car up to a LARGE PIPE with rusted holes along its side.

STUART
It looks somewhat like a pipe.

CAMILLE
It is a pipe.

STUART
Oh.

Stuart climbs out of the car.

CUT TO:

INT. PIPE HOUSE - NIGHT

Stuart stands with his suitcases and looks around the living room. It's a mess. Tiny shreds of newspaper and plastic everywhere.

REGINALD
The family living room.

Camille walks over and puts a hand on Stuart.

CAMILLE
It's not what you thought it
would look like is it?

STUART
Oh no. It's a wonderful home.

REGINALD
You bet it is. It just needs a little cleaning.

Reginald puts his hand on Stuart's shoulder.

REGINALD
I bet you could have this whole house in shape within a couple weeks.

STUART
I could?

REGINALD
Maybe even one week.

STUART
One week?

REGINALD
It's going to be great having you home.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stuart follows Camille and Reginald and works his way through narrow and dark passageways within the walls of the pipes. He tries his best not to get his tuxedo dirty.

The SOUND OF SQUEAKING FILTERS INTO THE HALL. They reach an opening. Stuart steps in.

BEDROOM. Stuart finds himself in a cramped room. About eight young tiny mice are huddled together in the corner sleeping. They all look over.

REGINALD
Stuart, these are your brothers and sisters.

CAMILLE
This is your big brother Stuart.

REGINALD
He's come to stay with us. He'll be your babysitter from now on.

STUART
I will?

Beat. The mice gang rush over and give Stuart the group sniff. They smell his hat, his clothes and his feet. Stuart smiles through it.

CAMILLE
They like you.

STUART
I like them too.

The mice sniff his bags.

STUART
I'm afraid I didn't bring any gifts...
(beat)
I didn't know I was coming till tonight.

The young mice quickly lose interest. They move back to their corner and begin to lay down all huddled together. They fall fast asleep.

CAMILLE
It's past their bedtime. They'll play with you tomorrow.

REGINALD
You better get some rest yourself. You have a lot of chores to do when you wake up.

STUART

I do?

REGINALD
Everyone's got to pull their weight around here Stuart. You don't have a problem with that do you?

STUART
No sir.

REGINALD
I hope not.

Beat.

CAMILLE
It's going to be so great having you here.

REGINALD
Yes it will.

An awkward silence. Beat.

REGINALD
Goodnight Stuart Stout.

Stuart gets upset by the sound of his new name.

STUART
-Good night.

Camille and Reginald leave the room.

Beat. Stuart looks around sad and weary. He watches over his new siblings quietly, then opens his bag.

He pulls out Mr. Little's handkerchief. After spreading it out on the ground, he uses his suitcase flat as a pillow. Beat.

SILENCE. Stuart lays awake, staring at the pipe ceiling. After a long while, he gets up and takes the handkerchief with him as he leaves the bedroom.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIPE HOUSE - NIGHT

Stuart emerges from one of the rusted holes in the pipe. He silently moves to the car. He climbs in the back seat.

Stuart quietly lays down wearing the tuxedo Mrs. Little bought for him. Closes his eyes and falls asleep in the miniature car George Little made for him. Covered by the handkerchief Mr. Little gave to him.

Stuart Stout closes his eyes as tight as he can.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HALL - MORNING

A door creaks open in the hallway of the Little house. Snowbell emerges from his small townhouse in the laundry closet. He stretches as he moves to the punch in clock. Punches in for the day with a yawn.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Snowbell stands in the doorway to Stuart's bedroom. He shakes his head at what he sees.

Stuart's matchbox bed sits empty. Laying on the guest bed next to the bureau are Mr. and Mrs. Little. They fell asleep in their day clothes.

Curled in a chair, also fast asleep, is George. His sneakers dangle off the edge of the armrest. The Little family sleeps quietly around Stuart's things.

Snowbell hacks up a hair ball and leaves the room. THE SOUND OF THE HACKING WAKES UP EVERYONE.

GEORGE
Stuart?

Mr. and Mrs. Little sit up. George looks around. Sees his parents.

GEORGE
Mom.

MRS. LITTLE
Yes dear?

GEORGE
I had a terrible dream. I dreamt Stuart left with his real family and never came back.

Beat. Mr. and Mrs. Little don't know what to say. They stare quietly at Stuart's things.

George's confused eyes move around the silent room and come to rest on the empty matchbox bed. Beat.

GEORGE
Oh no.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIPE HOUSE - MORNING

HIGH PITCHED WHISPERING.

Stuart's eyes slowly open. BRIGHT SUNLIGHT makes him squint. HIS VISION CLEARS...

Eight sets of tiny eyes peer at him over the hood of the car. Stuart sits up in the back seat and smiles at his tiny brothers and sisters that have gathered around him.

STUART
Good morning.

Stuart steps out of the car.

STUART
You all must be wondering why I'm sleeping in a car when I could be inside with my real family who I haven't seen my whole life?
(Stuart thinks)
That wasn't very thoughtful of me.

JEREMY
Play. Play.

Stuart snaps out of his thoughts.

STUART
You want to play? Right now?

SARA
Play.

Stuart's tired eyes look around at the excited faces.

STUART
What shall we play?

CUT TO:

EXT. GUTTER - MORNING

Stuart and the eight tiny mice stand at the edge of a gutter that circles the perimeter of the construction site. They watch as the water in the gutter canal flows past them.

STUART
Is this what you all do for fun?

WENDEL
Wait. Wait.

TONY
Yes wait.

Stuart and the young mice stand silently. Beat.

STUART
(whispers)
What's supposed to happen?

The young mice don't get a chance to answer. Their attention gets drawn to a PAPER CUP that comes floating down the gutter. The paper cup bobs its way around a turn and floats right in front of the group of children.

That's when WENDEL jumps.

STUART
Oh no!

Wendel lands squarely on the paper cup. He skillfully balances himself on the curved surface. He SQUEALS WITH GLEE AS he rides the rapids. The rest of the tiny mice jump up and down excitedly around Stuart.

STUART
Is this why we're here?

The children give their answer as they begin to leap one by one over the edge. Stuart watches as they each land on debris floating by in the gutter. Candy bar wrappers, brown lunch bags, leaves...The children ride them like amusement park rides.

STUART
This is very disturbing behavior.

Stuart watches in disbelief as the eight mice kids go screaming playfully down the gutter.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRAIN - MORNING

Stuart runs along the gutter's edge. He slows and comes to a stop. The gutter ends in a metal drain. The water disappears through an intricate grate.

The eight mice kids are laughing and playing near the drain.

STUART
Is anyone injured?

SARA
Fun. Fun.

JEREMY
Again. Again.

The kids giggle and splash each other with water.

STUART
We shouldn't be playing these type of things. Maybe we can find something else to do?

Beat. The children look at each other.

STUART
How about I tell you a story?

CUT TO:

EXT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Stuart is carefully cleaning up the messy living room. As he does, he talks to the eight tiny mice seated in a half circle on the floor.

STUART
...and the Lillian B. Womrath spun around and around in the water. Deeper and deeper it sank. The last thing anyone saw, was the sail as it disappeared under the water.

The mice children "ooh" and "aah" as they listen, captivated.

STUART
And the wind filled The Wasp's sails and pushed it to victory.
(Beat)
And everyone lived... happily... ever... after.

Stuart stops picking up trash. The last words hit him hard.

THE CHILDREN CLAP.

WENDEL
Good fairy tale. Good fairy tale.

SARA
Are fairy tales real? Are they real?

Beat. Stuart takes a long time to answer.

STUART
No. They're just made up stories.

Beat.

JEREMEY
Tell it again. Again.

SARA
Yes, yes. Again.

Stuart snaps out of his daze. He smiles bravely at the enthusiastic faces and begins cleaning again.

STUART
There once was a fine boat named The Wasp...

CUT TO:

INT. STOUT PIPE DINING ROOM - EVENING

Stuart and the Stouts have gathered for a meal.

CAMILLE
What's wrong Stuart? You look sad?

Stuart glances up and sees all the staring faces.

STUART
Oh, you all must be wondering why I look so gloomy and bereaved when I'm eating my first dinner with my real family whom I haven't seen my whole life?
(Stuart thinks)
That's not very grateful of me.

REGINALD
No it's not. And it's not an easy feat to feed another mouth around here.

STOUT
I know sir.

Stuart takes a spoonful from his plate.

STUART
This is quite delicious.

CAMILLE
It's made of three cheeses.

STUART
I didn't know there was more than one kind.

Beat. Everyone stops eating.

REGINALD
One kind? You've never heard of Swiss cheese? Or Cheddar Cheese?

Stuart nods, "No."

SARA
How about Bleu Cheese?

Stuart nods "No" again.

JEREMY
Or provolone?

WENDEL
Or Gorgonzola?

STUART
No I haven't. That last one sounds scary.

REGINALD
Don't teach these kind of vaiues to your brothers and sisters. A mouse should know all the known cheeses of the world.

STUART
He should?

REGINALD
What did you eat at the Littles?

Stuart brightens.

STUART
Oh lots of wonderful things... Western Omelettes, fried zucchini and all varieties of meat loaf.

Beat. Reginald stares at Stuart. Stuart loses his brightness very quickly.

REGINALD
I'm sorry we don't have any of those wonderful things here.

STUART
It's okay.

REGINALD
You don't have to eat your dinner if you don't like it.

STUART
Oh I like it.

CAMILLE
He likes it.

REGINALD
Kids, if you're still hungry, you can have Stuart's dinner. He doesn't like what we eat around here.

The kids are starving. They descend on Stuart's plate. In seconds, it's empty.

Stuart stares at the crumbs of what used to be his three cheese dinner.

STUART
(soft)
Oh dear.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

The Little family dining room. All three eat quietly. Beat.

Mrs. Little puts down her fork.

MRS. LITTLE
Everything is so... so...

MR. LITTLE
Lacking in tastiness.

MRS. LITTLE
Exactly, lacking in tastiness.

Beat.

GEORGE
The house is different now.
(beat)
It's like... like it's...

MR. LITTLE
Missing him too.

GEORGE
Yeah, missing him too.

They all stare at the empty paper clip chair sitting next to Mrs. Little's water glass.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIPE - AFTERNOON

Camille sits on an empty pack of cigarettes that hangs from two pieces of thread like a swing. She sits outside their hole in the pipe and watches the empty road.

Stuart emerges from the pipe house. He glances at the empty parking space where the miniature car used to be parked. Stuart walks up to Camille who sits with her hands folded.

STUART
The tiny ones are taking a nap.

CAMILLE
Thank you Stuart.

Stuart and Camille keep taking turns glancing down the empty road that leads to the pipe. No sign of anyone.

Stuart's eyes linger back to the spot where the miniature car used to be parked.

STUART
George gave it to me.

CAMILLE
I know sweetie.
(beat)
I'm sure Reginald just borrowed it.

Beat. Stuart looks down the road with great concern. He feels a stare and turns to see Camille gazing at him.

STUART
You must think I'm a terrible son to worry about a car when my real father whom I haven't seen my whole life isn't home yet and might be lost somewhere.
(Stuart thinks)
What's wrong with me?

CAMILLE
I don't think that at all Stuart.
(beat)
And your father isn't lost.

STUART

He's not.

CAMILLE
No.

STUART
You know where he is?

CAMILLE
I know exactly where he is.

STUART
You do?
(beat)
Where is he?

CUT TO:

INT. UNFINISHED OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Stuart moves through the abandoned office building. It's half completed state is slowly deteriorating.

CUT TO:

INT. UNFINISHED BATHROOM - NIGHT

Dice fly. Cards are dealt. SOUNDS OF EXCITED YELLS AND DEJECTED MOANS fill the tiled room.

An abandoned office bathroom has been turned into a bustling back room casino.

Each stall has a different game. The urinals have been turned into slots.

Raggedy cats, dirty pigeons, overweight rats, and the occasional mouse make up the sleazy gamblers of this porcelain den of betting.

A nervous Stuart moves around the room until he finds Mr. Stout slumped over a poker table. Stuart taps him.

STUART
I'm supposed to bring you
home now.

REGINALD

I hit a bad streak Stuart.

STUART
I'm sorry your streak was bad.

REGINALD
I lost the car.

Beat.

REGINALD
I didn't have anything else to bet.

STUART
George gave me it.

REGINALD
I'm sorry, now don't start crying.

Stuart's eyes fill with tears.

CLEVE
Who's gonna cry?

Cleve, the cat Snowbell and his thugs were harassing in the park, walks up.

CLEVE
We can't have crying in this joint Reggie.

REGINALD
Let the kid play a hand. He'll feel better.

CLEVE
Yeah kid, why don't you play. You might win the car back.

Stuart wipes his eyes, and looks up.

STUART

I could?

A couple of pigeons at the table snicker. Stuart looks around.

STUART
I don't know how to play this game.

CLEVE
What game do you want to play? We got everything.

Beat. Stuart thinks it over.

STUART
Do you have any family games?

CLEVE
Family games?
(beat)
What kind a family games?

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM CASINO - NIGHT

The joint has quieted down. Everyone is huddled around the middle stall and watches as a couple pigeons, a rat, and Stuart are playing SCRABBLE.

Reginald and Cleve watch in the crowd.

LEON, a skinny pigeon, scratches his head.

LEON
Okay, here it is.

Leon lays out his letters on the board. Everyone stares at the "K", "O", and "M."

SNIFFLES, an older pigeon, stares.

SNIFFLES
What's that?

LEON
Kom. Like... "I kom my feathers."

STUART
I'm afraid it's a "C" instead of a "K" and a "B" at the very end.

LEON
A "B" at the very end?

Leon picks up his letters.

LEON
This is one tough game.

SNIFFLES
All right, my turn. My turn.

Sniffles lays down his letters. Both of them.

SNIFFLES
"It"... as in "I ate it."

LEON
Aw - that's good.

Sniffles writes down his score on the score pad. We see Stuart has hundreds of points more than anyone else.

SNIFFLES
Two points! How do you like me now?

STUART
I like you very much Mr. Sniffles.

SNIFFLES
It's Sniffles.
(He sniffles)
Just Sniffles.

Stuart gazes down at his letters. Everyone gets silent. Tension fills the room. Beat.

Cleve eyes Stuart's face. He whispers to Reginald.

CLEVE
The kid's got nothing,
Reggie.

It takes a while, but Stuart looks up and smiles sweetly.

STUART
Oh, I think I have another
word.

Everyone groans.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Stuart is driving the miniature car home. Mr. Stout leans against the passenger door, eyes closed.

REGINALD
What does "memento" mean
anyway?

STUART
It's a thing that reminds you
of a time that's gone and
you'll never have again.

Stuart touches the dash of the car sadly. Beat. Reginald watches him quietly. His expression softens for the first time.

CUT TO:

INT. LITTLE LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Mrs. Little and Mr. Little are seated on the sofa. They look lower than low. Snowbell lays comfortably on their laps. He's asleep.

Mrs. Carol Keeper is seated with her bee hive hairdo across from them. She sips her tea gently.

MRS. LITTLE
It's very kind of you to drop by and check on us like this.

MRS. KEEPER
I wanted to. I'm a people person.

Beat. Mrs. Keeper watches as Mrs. Little pulls a wad of tissues from her pocket. She blows her nose.

MRS. KEEPER
How have things been at home?

MRS. LITTLE
Very difficult.

MRS. KEEPER
Difficult?

MRS. LITTLE
Worse.

MRS. KEEPER
Worse than very difficult?

MRS. LITTLE
Yes, it's almost...

MR. LITTLE
Unbearable.

MRS. LITTLE
Yes unbearable.

MRS. KEEPER
My God, I had no idea. You should have called me.

Mrs. Keeper shakes her head concerned.

MRS. KEEPER
Maybe this isn't the best time
for my news then.

Mr. and Mrs. Little look up sharply.

MR. LITTLE
You have some news?

MRS. LITTLE
What type of news?

MRS. KEEPER
Not very good news I'm
afraid.

Mrs. Little sits up sharply. Snowbell falls from her lap.

Snowbell wakes up as he hits the floor hard.

SNOWBELL
Hey I'm working over here!

Beat. Mrs. Keeper takes a deep breath. Snowbell slowly climbs back into her lap.

MRS. KEEPER
There was an accident...
They didn't make it.

MRS. LITTLE
Who didn't make it!

MRS. KEEPER
Stuart's biological parents.

Snowbell gets tossed to the floor as Mr. and Mrs. Little sit up again.

MR. LITTLE
What happened?

MRS. KEEPER
It was awful. They were in a grocery store... Canned food aisle. There was an unsteady pyramid of cans made. It collapsed. It took three bag boys to dig through it.

MRS. LITTLE
How terrible!

MRS. KEEPER
Creamed mushroom soup... Two for one sale...
(beat)
It was awful.

The room goes silent. No one knows what to say. Beat.

MRS. LITTLE
Poor Stuart.

MRS. KEEPER
At least he was young. Children don't remember much at two years.

Mr. and Mrs. Little glance at each other and then back to Mrs. Keeper.

MRS. LITTLE
Two? What do you mean?

MRS. KEEPER
Stuart's parents died when he was two. That's when he was sent to the orphanage.

Beat.

MR. LITTLE
There must be some mistake.

MRS. LITTLE
Must be.

MRS. KEEPER
Why must there be?

MRS. LITTLE
Because Stuart's parents
came and took him away
three days ago.

MRS. KEEPER
Stuart's parents died in a
tragic Creamed Mushroom
Soup incident. I just told you.

MRS. LITTLE
Are you certain?

Mrs. Keeper nods "Yes." slowly. All breathing in the room stops.

MR. LITTLE
I'm beginning to believe,
someone's played a terrible,
terrible trick on all of us.

Mr. and Mrs. Little and Mrs. Keeper think carefully.

Snowbell starts to slip across the room.

SNOWBELL
Uh, I'm going to take my
lunch now.

No one notices as Snowbell dives out an open window.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMENT WALL - AFTERNOON

We are at the cement wall where Benny, Vinny and Tommy are chilling.

Snowbell leaps onto the edge suddenly, startling all three of them.

BENNY
Snow - you scared the fur
balls out of us.

TOMMY
Forgetaboutit. I thought my heart stopped.

SNOWBELL
They found out about the Stuart number? They don't know who did it, they just know it's a scam.

VINNY
We're gonna get busted!

SNOWBELL
I knew we shouldn't have done this!

BENNY
What are we gonna do?

SAL
Keep your voices down.

Sal's huge figure emerges from the shadows.

SAL
I'll tell you what we gotta do... We gotta hit the park. Find Cleve. Send the word...

SNOWBELL
What word?

SAL
That the mouse has to sleep with the fishes.

SNOWBELL
You mean scratch him out?

SAL
Scratched.

Snowbell looks tentative.

SAL
You aren't going soft on me
are you young Snowbell?

Beat. It takes a second, but Snowbell starts acting tough again.

SNOWBELL
Who's going soft?

Sal nods and looks over his posse of cats and then looks out over the park.

SAL
Get the word out... Stuart
Little gets scratched out
tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. PIPE HOME - NIGHT

Two hushed shadows move through the halls of the Stout pipe home. They move very quietly into the children's room.

They move towards Stuart who lays asleep in the corner by himself.

They step into the GLOW OF A TINY NIGHT LIGHT. Reginald and Camille stare down at a sleeping Stuart with tense expressions. They look around at the other sleeping children and then glance at each other.

Reginald reaches for Stuart... Stuart suddenly wakes. He gets frightened by the faces of Camille and Reginald gazing down at him.

REGINALD
(whispers)
Time to wake up.

STUART
(whispers)
Is something wrong?

CAMILLE
(whispers)
No, nothing's wrong dear.

REGINALD
(whispers)
Some of my friends have gathered. They want to meet you. Don't ask anymore questions though. We have to hurry.

STUART
(whispers)
A gathering. I don't know what to wear to a gathering.

CAMILLE
(whispers)
Wear what you want.

REGINALD
(whispers)
Yeah, wear anything.

Beat.

STUART
(whispers)
Is it a formal gathering?

REGINALD
(whispers)
I don't know.

CAMILLE
(whispers)
No it's not formal.

Beat.

STUART
(whispers)
What's the weather like?

REGINALD
(whispers)
Just put something on!

CAMILLE
(whispers)
It's a bit chilly. Wear your green suit. I like that suit.

STUART
(whispers)
That's a fine suit. What are you wearing to the gathering?

REGINALD
(whispers)
She's not going.

CAMILLE
(whispers)
I'm not going.

STUART
(whispers)
Oh that's a shame.

Stuart looks sadly at Camille.

REGINALD
(whispers)
Hurry up!

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Reginald is behind the wheel and driving at top speed. Stuart sits in the passenger seat. He glances over.

STUART
You're driving fast.

REGINALD
I told you. Don't ask any questions.

STUART

That wasn't a question. I just said you were driving fast.

REGINALD
Oh.

Beat.

STUART
You're mad at me.

REGINALD
Stop asking questions that don't sound like questions!

STUART
Is it okay if I ask questions that sound like questions?

REGINALD
Don't ask anything that sounds anything like a question.

STUART
I see.

Beat. They drive in silence. Speeding down the dark roads.

REGINALD
I'm not mad at you.

STUART
Then why won't you look at me?

Reginald keeps driving.

CUT TO:

EXT. FERRY DOCK - NIGHT

The miniature car pulls up to the dock.

STUART
We have to take the ferry full of trash to get to the gathering?

REGINALD
Yes.

STUART
Isn't this gathering rather far away?

REGINALD
It is where it is! We have to go to where it is!

Stuart stares at Reginald. Beat.

STUART
Are you nervous about something?

Reginald turns quickly.

REGINALD
What are you talking about?

STUART
It's just your fingers are fidgeting.

Reginald's fingers instantly stop moving.

REGINALD
My fingers fidget, so what?

Stuart continues to stare.

STUART
And now you're sweating somewhat suddenly.

REGINALD

I'm not sweating somewhat suddenly at all!

Stuart leans closer.

STUART
There are two drops of sweat dropping down your face.

REGINALD
Two drops don't mean a thing.

STUART
Wait, three drops. I see three drops of sweat dropping down your face.

REGINALD
Three drops can be easily explained.

STUART
Four! Four drops dropping!

Reginald becomes very still. Stares straight ahead.

STUART
Five!
(beat)
Six!

Reginald shakes. He's about to explode with the pressure.

STUART
Seven!

REGINALD
Allright! Allright! I give up! You're not our son!

STUART
Eight!

Beat. Stuart sits straight up.

STUART
(soft)
What was that?

CUT TO:

EXT. FERRY DOCK - NIGHT

THE TRASH FERRY SOUNDS IT'S HORN AS IT PULLS INTO THE DOCK.

Stuart and Reginald are still as they sit in the car. Beat.

STUART
You owed Cleve the declawed cat a large amount of money?

REGINALD
Very large.

STUART
Cleve the declawed cat said he'd forget about the money if you did him a favor?

REGINALD
An awful favor.

Beat.

STUART
You lied and cheated?

REGINALD
Yes.

STUART
You acted without thought or regard for other people's feelings?

REGINALD
Yes.

STUART
You tricked the Littles into letting me go even though they loved me desperately and would have done anything in the world to keep me if they thought I was happy?

REGINALD
Yes Stuart.

Beat.

STUART
That's so very wonderful!

REGINALD
I think you missed something.

STUART
That's why I've been feeling so sad! That's why I keep thinking of them! I'm not a bad son! I'm a good son! I'm not a Stout! I'm a Little!... I'm Stuart Little!

REGINALD
(whispers)
Stuart you must listen. You're in danger.

Stuart stops smiling.

REGINALD
The cats. They want to scratch you out. I'm supposed to hand you over tonight.

Stuart looks scared.

REGINALD
As your fake father. I suggest that you run somewhere far. far away and never come back.

STUART
Never ever?

REGINALD
Never.

Stuart's eyes fill with tears.

REGINALD
Stuart are you okay?

Stuart doesn't answer. He just looks at Reginald silently.

REGINALD
(whispers)
Say something Stuart please.

Beat. It takes a while, but the words, finally come out.

STUART
(whispers)
...I'm going home.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOCK - NIGHT

The trash ferry pulls away from the dock. Stuart stands next to the miniature car and waves to the shore.

DOCK

Reginald waves back.

REGINALD
Bye fake son!

TRASH FERRY

STUART
Bye fake father!

Beat. Stuart turns and sits on the bumper of his car and watches as the ferry glides over the black water.

The SHIMMERING LIGHTS OF MANHATTAN grow stronger and stronger. They sparkle like stars in Stuart's big teary eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

George Little walks down a path in Central Park with a stuffed back pack.

He stops in front of a tree in the picnic area and pulls a sheet of paper from his pack. He starts tacking it to the tree bark. He steps back and looks at it before moving on down the path.

The piece of paper is a flier. On the flier is a picture of Stuart. He looks at us with glasses and a big smile. Underneath his picture reads,

"MISSING
NAME: STUART LITTLE
DESCRIPTION: LOOKS SOMEWHAT LIKE A MOUSE."

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Little are talking with a group of squirrels at the base of a walking trail. They hand the squirrels the Stuart flier.

MRS. LITTLE
He was last seen wearing a
Ballroom Ben tuxedo.

MR. LITTLE
...He has a knack for sailing
miniature boats.

MRS. LITTLE
...He likes all varieties of meat loaf.

MR. LITTLE
...He has a tendency to get trapped in refrigerators.

MRS. LITTLE
...He thinks the last word in 'Twas the night before Christmas' is 'louse'.

Mr. and Mrs. Little wait anxiously for a response from the squirrels who study the image of Stuart carefully before nodding their squirrel heads in unison, "No."

The Littles take the news hard.

The moment ends as HIGH PITCHED SCREECHES FILL THE AIR.

The squirrels immediately shimmy up the trees and disappear into the foliage.

Mr. and Mrs. Little turn in time to see a pack of three cats come stampeding across the path. They're screaming and generally acting psychotic. They knock over every trash can that lines the walking paths. Trash spills out everywhere.

And just as fast as they appeared, they tear into the bushes and out of sight.

Mr. and Mrs. Little stare at the path of disaster they left in their wake.

MRS. LITTLE
That was so... so very...

MR. LITTLE
Evil and unnecessary.

MRS. LITTLE
Yes, exactly.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

The miniature car stands still in a walkway intersection at the far side of the park. Stuart stares over the steering wheel at the countless paths winding in all directions. Stuart sighs heavily as he stares from one path to the next.

Stuart closes his eyes.

STUART
Every Little in the world can find the Little house. Every Little in the world can find the Little house.

Stuart opens his eyes and stares down a path winding to his left. He starts up the miniature car and begins at a sensible pace down the chosen walkway.

Stuart follows the walkway around a turn. The path reveals itself to be covered in trash. Stuart maneuvers around the garbage slowly. A WAD OF STRAWBERRY GUM STICKS TO HIS WHEEL. Stuart gazes out the window at the glob of pink goo that rotates with his tires.

Stuart looks around at all the mess.

STUART
Who would do this? It's so evil and unnecessary.

SUDDENLY A WOMAN PUSHING A BABY CARRIAGE comes racing across the path. Stuart breaks instantly and watches as the woman and the carriage get chased by a HUGE SCREECHING CAT THAT LOPES AFTER HER. Sal and the baby carriage disappear around a turn of trees. Beat.

STUART
Maybe this isn't the best way?.

Just as Stuart is about to turn back, A RHYTHMIC METALLIC NOISE BECOMES LOUDER AND LOUDER BEHIND HIM. Stuart turns to see a HUGE BICYCLE barreling out of control towards him. The bike has three skinny scrawny cats balancing on it. Two on the handle bars. One on the seat.

The bicycle tires are thick enough to turn Stuart and the miniature car into a smudge on the walkway.

The three thug cats spot Stuart up ahead.

BENNY
Bada-Bing Bada-Bang. Look who it is?

VINNY
Time to get scratched!

TOMMY
Forgetaboutit!

STUART
Oh dear.

Stuart hits the gas.

The cats barely control the bicycle. Its wildly spinning tires crush every weed and blade of grass growing on the sidewalk.

Stuart keeps motoring at top speed. The bicycle starts to close the distance. Stuart dodges all the pieces of trash that have been spilled onto the walkway.

He can't avoid a discarded newspaper page. The paper instantly clings to the front bumper, covering the zooming car like a blanket. Stuart can only see black and white print.

The car slows to a stop wrapped inside a cocoon of newspaper. It sits still in the middle of the path.

THE CATS AND THE BARRELING BICYCLE COME RIPPING THROUGH THE TRASH ON THE WALKWAY.

At the last possible moment - THE COCOON GIVES BIRTH. THE CAR EXPLODES FROM INSIDE WITH A ROAR OF ITS TINY ENGINE. IT SPEEDS DOWN THE SIDEWALK. Bits of newspaper cling to Stuart's panicked face.

The bicycle rips the leftover newspaper on the path to shreds as it closes in on Stuart.

STUART
(yelling)
This is certainly the end for me. What a sad way to die with bits of newspaper on my face and strawberry gum on my tires.

Stuart makes a quick decision as the METALLIC CLANGING OF THE TIRE AND THE SCREECHING OF THE CATS ECHOES JUST BEHIND HIM NOW.

The bicycle tire touches the bumper of the miniature car when Stuart swerves to the left onto the grass. The bicycle rockets down the narrow path. Stuart slows to a stop, panting, and watches as the out of control ten speed crashes into a line of bushes. The cats get launched airborne over the bushes.

THREE THUDS ARE HEARD IN THE DISTANCE.

Stuart turns and presses down on the accelerator. The car takes off like a bullet down the path.

CUT TO:

EXT. PATH - NIGHT

Stuart slows and suddenly stops.

A small stream of gutter water travels over the walkway he's on. It flows over the pavement and into a tiny canal that winds through the park.

Stuart stares at the rippling waters, then turns and gazes down the long dark path he just drove. He looks around slowly.

STUART
(whispers)
Every Little in the world can
find the Little house.

Stuart sits up in the car when HE HEARS SHARP CLAWS CLICKING AGAINST PAVEMENT IN THE DISTANCE.

He turns and watches mesmerized as an enormous SHADOW stretches over the path behind him. SAL appears around the bend. Sal and Stuart make eye contact. Sal calls out from down the path.

SAL
You and I have some
business to discuss mouse.

Stuart turns back to the tiny stream... eyes searching, desperate. They lock on a Big Mac box that floats down the gutter.

Sal erupts into a full sprint.

No time to think. Stuart hits the gas as the Big Mac box floats by. He drives RIGHT ONTO THE BOX AND HITS THE BRAKES. The car is instantly whisked down the gutter on its cardboard ride.

Sal reaches the stream seconds later. He turns and runs along the edge of the gutter, hugging tight to every sudden curve.

Sal catches up with the Big Mac box quickly. He whips his paw at Stuart - THE SHARP CLAWS SLICE THE AIR JUST ABOVE STUART'S DUCKING HEAD.

Stuart grips the steering wheel tight as the Big Mac box bobs and dips with the gutter water.

Sal's shadow covers Stuart and the car. The massive cat runs alongside them now. Sal times his leap. He's just about to jump at Stuart when...

The Big Mac box carrying Stuart and the miniature car disappears into a pipe that juts out from the side of a rock.

Sal comes quickly to a stop at the entrance of the pipe. He stands panting and watches helplessly as the water flows into the darkness of the tiny opening.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK DRAIN - NIGHT

The Big Mac box and the miniature car float with the water in a gutter. The car is covered in bits of trash. Stuart is soaked. He clings to the wheel tightly as the car moves along slowly.

Stuart looks beat. He's in a daze as the Big Mac box takes a turn with the gutter and comes to a gentle stop at a large grate where all the gutter water falls into the sewer. The box comes to rest in a group of papers and trash.

Stuart presses the accelerator. The tires spin helplessly in the slippery trash. The miniature car is stuck.

Stuart slowly lowers his forehead to the steering wheel. He mumbles to himself.

STUART
Every Little in the world...

He doesn't finish the sentence. He stares down sadly for a long time before looking up.

When he does, he realizes he's not in the park any longer. The miniature car is stuck in a gutter under a street lamp.

Stuart looks around slowly and suddenly stops breathing.

Across the street, ten feet away, sits the Little Brownstone.

Stuart gazes up at the modest home with the WARM LIGHTS GLOWING FROM THE FRONT WINDOW.

STUART
(whispers)
This is the most beautiful
home in the world I think.

Stuart lifts his suitcase from the car and walks across the street. He starts to climb the stairs.

SUDDENLY A HISSING STREAK LEAPS FROM THE SHADOWS. Snowbell lands on the step above Stuart. He stands between Stuart and the home. SNOWBELL'S CLAWS CLICK ON THE CEMENT. His ears shoot back... Stuart drops his suitcase.

Before Snowbell can raise his claws to strike... Stuart hugs him. Beat.

STUART
Snowbell, my friend.

Snowbell's ears slowly raise in confusion. Stuart steps back.

STUART
I'm so sorry.

Beat.

SNOWBELL
What're you talking about?

STUART
I didn't get to say goodbye
before I left. I felt so terrible.

Snowbell stares in disbelief. He's about to say something. Sal, Benny, Vinny, and Tommy jump out from behind a set of trash cans. Sal emerges slowly from the shadows of a stairway.

Stuart turns to see the four cats surround the steps of the Little house.

STUART
You better not come any closer. Snowbell's our house cat and he'll thrash you all.

Sal. Benny. Vinny and Tommy inch closer.

STUART
You've been warned.

Snowbell doesn't move. His face is blank. Sal chuckles.

SAL
He's a trusting little fellow isn't he?
(beat)
Take him where no one will see what we do.

With that. Benny Vinny and Tommy pluck Stuart from the stairs. They carry him by his hands and legs.

STUART
SNOWBELL!

Snowbell sits statue-like and watches as the group crosses the street to the park.

Stuart stares upward at the night sky as he gets carried by the pack of cats.

STUART
This is certainly the end for me. What a sad way to die - dragged away by unemployed cats.

The whole group suddenly stops short at the entrance to the park as a STREAKING FIGURE LEAPS IN FRONT OF THEM.

Stuart stares upside down at Snowbell.

SNOWBELL

No one's ever said goodbye to me before. Not even my family.

STUART
(upside down)
That's very sad. Saying goodbye is a very important thing. It shows how much you care.

SAL
What kind a talk is this! Hugs and goodbyes! What are we spaded or something! We're scratching someone out here! Let's act like it!
(beat)
Snowbell move out of the way.

Beat.

SNOWBELL
No.

Benny, Vinny, and Tommy let out a collective GASP.

SAL
Were you talking to me?

SNOWBELL
Yes I was.

Beat. Sal looks to Benny, Vinny, and Tommy.

SAL
Tear his fur off!

The three thug cats drop Stuart on the ground. Stuart turns and sees the cats leap at Snowbell. The four cats tumble back into the bushes that line the park.

Stuart and Sal watch as the bushes shake violently. It's a fierce battle.

Stuart punches his little fists into the air.

STUART
Take that. And that. And that.

And then the bushes become still. Stuart and Sal are riveted in silence. Beat.

Snowbell emerges from the bushes. Patches of fur missing from his coat.

Stuart runs to Snowbell's side.

Sal stands statue-like in the shadows. Snowbell and him stare at each other a long time. Beat. Sal nods slowly.

SAL
You earned my respect
Snowbell. That's a rare thing.
(beat)
You could be my right hand
cat? We could rule the park?

Beat. Snowbell stares at the massive cat.

SNOWBELL
Sorry... I got a job.

Stuart smiles big.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROWNSTONE STEPS - NIGHT

Stuart hugs Snowbell tight. After a long beat. Snowbell gently pats Stuart on the back.

SNOWBELL
Alright. take it easy. We're
getting all emotional here.
Someone might see us.

Stuart steps back - a grin from ear to ear. He picks his suitcase up and straightens his suit.

Snowbell looks at Stuart. Sighs.

SNOWBELL

You better go up... I think
they're waiting for you.

Snowbell moves aside. Stuart slowly climbs the stairs. He reaches the landing. The LIGHT FROM THE BAY WINDOW draws him. He walks along the edge and looks inside.

The Littles are at the dining room table at supper. Mrs. Little stares at the tiny empty paper clip chair sitting next to her water glass. Mr. Little stares off in a daze. George picks at his food but doesn't eat anything.

Stuart stares at the three of them. His eyes glaze with emotion. His nose presses up against the glass.

It's then that George looks over.

THE WHOLE SCENE IS FROM STUART'S POV OUTSIDE THE WINDOW

George spots Stuart. He nods and returns to his meal. Beat. George looks up, this time sharply. His mouth opens. He screams "Stuart!", but we can't hear anything through the glass.

Mr. and Mrs. Little leap out of their seats as they look over. They scream. "Stuart!", but we can't hear them either.

All three rush towards the window. They come right up to the glass.

STUART
Mom! Dad! George!

Mrs. Little, Mr. Little and George are all talking at the same time. Their faces are right up at the glass with Stuart's. Mrs. Little starts to cry.

Stuart speaks at the glass.

STUART
I missed you all so much!

The Littles are so excited. They just keep on talking.

George moves away from the glass and quickly returns with a miniature bicycle. He holds it to the glass and points to Stuart!

STUART
For me? It's wonderful!

Mr. Little holds up the flier against the window then stands and tells about how they put them up everywhere looking for him. Mr. Little is bursting with joy.

Mrs. Little blows her nose into her handkerchief as she tells Stuart everything in her heart. Stuart can't hear any of it, but he understands every word. He wipes his own tears.

Stuart finally points to the front door.

STUART
I'm coming in!

Stuart runs for the door.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT HALL - NIGHT

The mail slot opens as Stuart's suitcase comes falling through. Stuart crawls in right behind.

The Littles come rushing from the family room in time to see Stuart landing on his feet.

MRS. LITTLE
My baby!

MR. LITTLE
Son!

GEORGE
Hey Stuart!

George scoops Stuart up. Everyone just looks at him. Stuart looks around at all the happy faces. No one says anything for a while. Beat.

MRS. LITTLE
What are you thinking dear?

GEORGE
Yeah?

Beat.

STUART
I was just thinking...

Stuart gazes at his mother, father and brother.

STUART
I was just thinking that...

MR. LITTLE
-this must be how people
look at the end of a fairy tale?

George and Mrs. Little hold their breath. Beat. Stuart's eyes fill with tears.

STUART
Yes... Exactly.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

All four of the Littles move back into the dining room. They're laughing and talking...

As we pull back from the modest brownstone, with the image of the Littles gathered together in the frame of the bay window, their happy shadows falling on the stairs below...

We start to think Stuart may be right. This may be the most beautiful house in the whole world.

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END.